Medieval Life Cycles

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Isabelle Cochelin and Karen Smyth

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It is with gratitude that Isabelle and Karen also acknowledge the tolerance of their respective families as this project has rumbled on alongside the intergenerational dynamics of family life. In whatever variety of ways the concept of the life cycle is pulled and teased in the essays that follow, one comforting thought is that when the lowest ebb of a cycle occurs, movement can only be towards the top again: during the course of this volume the passing of a dearly beloved partner has occurred but also the wonder and delight of new addition, with the adoption of a small infant. It is with pleasure that the volume is dedicated to Isabelle's daughter, Emily Cochelin (b. 2006), who has all the joys of the life cycle ahead.

Preface

Isabelle Cochelin and Karen Smyth

This collection prioritizes examination of transitions from one life-cycle stage to the next and intergenerational contact, from Anglo-Saxon times to the close of the late Middle Ages, in a range of geographical areas.[1] A reader going through the whole volume will have the opportunity to explore the entirety of the medieval life cycle in all its diversity and apparent contradictions. The volume tackles notions of simple categories such as 'youth' and 'age', by inviting revisions of attitudes and critical readings of the life cycle from late Antiquity to the Renaissance, with emphasis on how medieval perceptions, practices, and representations are full of continuity as much as of change, of stasis and of variation, of inconsistency, overlapping, merging, and morphing, as well as definitive and stable categories.

While there is a chronology in the narrative of the volume, with a move from consideration of infants to the elderly, the focus is on the continuity and change in the medieval conceptions of the various phases in the ageing process and of their interconnections. To date, most scholarly works have had a major methodological pitfall in their studies of the ages of medieval life cycles in the way that they have focused on one age, such as childhood or old age.[2] Yet medieval people rarely conceived of one age independently from the others: childhood was normally conceptualized in contrast to adulthood, and youth to old age. Therefore this volume

[1] Translations are by the editors and authors, unless otherwise indicated, for all quotations from Latin, French, and German sources. In addition, modern English translations have been provided of the Old English material and for substantial phrases in Middle English.

[2] Two important exceptions are Goodich, *From Birth to Old Age*, and Youngs, *The Life Cycle in Western Europe*. Because in this volume our perspectives are not limited to the later Middle Ages, we are able to nuance significantly the conclusions reached by these two authors.

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explores all ages, advancing from studies on childhood and adolescence to those tackling the topics of adulthood, middle age, and old age, but each phase is always seen to be in a negotiation of some form or another with other phase(s).

A range of fresh readings of familiar material, as well as analyses of some sources that are not so familiar, is the result of this changed focus. In regards to childhood, which has attracted quite a lot of attention in the last twenty years, it remains essential to move away from the sometimes too 'cute' conception of the first stage, as found in studies such as those by Hanawalt, Orme, Riché, or Alexandre-Bidon.[3] In this volume, Crawford's treatment of the burial of non-baptized infants and Dzon's exploration of the 'wanton' Christ Child adopt this new direction. With respect to medieval adolescence, a new wave of scholarly interest was spurred quite recently, primarily after the publication of the volume by Schmitt and Levy, but much remains to be done.[4] The two articles in this volume dealing with this age group (Sherwood and Cochelin) pay close attention to the Church's discourse, seldom studied on this issue until now. Adulthood (in the restricted sense of middle age) has been, so far, a terra incognita for medievalists: Youngs's and Niebrzydowski's articles demonstrate the need for more research on this topic. Finally, Semper's article enriches the previous studies done on old age (for example, Shulamith Shahar and Joel T. Rosenthal) by discussing the Anglo-Saxon period and insisting on the very different perspectives on old age that existed depending on the language and literary genre chosen by the authors.[5] Meanwhile, two contributions look more closely at how stages of life were discussed differently through diverse genres and scales (Smyth), and different centuries and social groups (Cochelin's introduction), and one is interested in the complex issue of cross-generational interactions (Kuhn).

Another key methodological principle of this collection is the recognition that scholars have had a tendency to pick and choose their sources, or to limit their research to one set corpus, as a single set usually offers an easier and more

[3] Hanawalt, 'Medievalists and the Study of Childhood'. The presentation of childhood in Hanawalt, *The Ties that Bound*, was less polemical and therefore more balanced. Orme, *Medieval Children*; Riché and Alexandre-Bidon, *L'Enfance au Moyen Âge*; Alexandre-Bidon and Lett, *Les Enfants au Moyen Âge*, translated as Alexandre-Bidon and Lett, *Children in the Middle Ages*, trans. by Gladding. These authors were right to reject Philippe Ariès's famous thesis, but went a few steps too far in their opposition to the French historian. For more balanced studies on medieval childhood, see below, note 7.

[4] Levi and Schmitt, *Storia dei giovani*, I, translated as Levi and Schmitt, *A History of Young People in the West*.

[5] Shahar, *Growing Old in the Middle Ages*; Rosenthal, *Old Age in Late Medieval England*.

manageable discourse. Therefore all of the articles in this volume juggle with varied genres of sources and cross traditional disciplinary frontiers, thus underlining the complexity of medieval discourses on the life cycle. The aim is to create a more nuanced and less idealized picture of the stages of life and their interrelationships in the medieval world. This produces a reflective element across the volume, with each author accessing new sources of information or providing new readings of familiar sources, and comparing with the methodologies of other scholars. The authors discuss how the chosen sources both reflect medieval conceptual, mental, artistic, cultural, or sociological processes, but also whether the source has an impact on them (that is, their contemporary function).

The final methodological concern to highlight is that the centuries engulfed under the expression 'the Middle Ages' did not profess one conception of the life cycle, but held a variety of views: how an eleventh-century Cluniac monk writing in Latin in a hagiographical source conceived of the stages of human life was quite distant from the conception held by Margery Kempe in the fourteenth century, and both had a quite different perspective from the one found in *Beowulf*. Therefore this volume is centred not only on the late Middle Ages, unlike most studies on the topic so far, but leads the readers from the Anglo-Saxon period to the fifteenth century, illustrating in this way the changing conception of the various stages of human life, through time, literary genres, social groups, and languages.

An overview of the critical arguments at stake in each of the essays and of how the essays interrelate with one another reveals the extent to which continuity and change happens not only within the medieval life cycle, but also in the trajectory of critical reception in this field. This collection opens with an introduction by Cochelin that presents pre-thirteenth-century definitions of the life cycle, acknowledging their diversity but ultimately underlining their consistency prior to the twelfth century, under the pens of ecclesiastical authors. The two fundamental studies on the topic of medieval definitions of the life cycle by Elisabeth Sears and John Anthony Burrow, both edited in 1986, did focus on the themes encompassing the evocation of these definitions by medieval authors, such as the parable of the vineyard (Matthew 20. 1–6).[6] Yet what has never been done so far is a study of these definitions for themselves. A chronological presentation of some eighty pre-thirteenth-century definitions of the life cycle (with a detailed exploration of terms used and their frequency) allows for a better understanding of the unusual and relatively consistent ecclesiastical comprehension of human life, from the sixth to the early twelfth century. For the first time, this work

[6] Sears, *The Ages of Man*; Burrow, *The Ages of Man*.

provides us with a basis of how the life cycle was perceived by Churchmen during the early and central Middle Ages in its most schematic form: with *adolescentia* being part of adulthood rather than childhood, middle age being absent, and old age (or, more appropriately, an old adulthood) that is divided into two stages. This acts as the point of departure for the rest of the volume, which shows that this narrow basis is useful and needs to be acknowledged, but that there are many more complexities and changes across the centuries. In other words, this chapter is an introduction in the literal sense of the word: it allows other studies (in this volume and in the future) to comprehend more easily, but only in order to afterwards complicate and even modify significantly the core conception of the life cycle that was dominant in the midst of one given group (male Church authors), in one language (Latin), in the early and central Middle Ages.

The volume continues next with a reassessment about attitudes towards the first age of life. The historiography on medieval childhood is now extensive and some readers might wonder if more ink needs to be spilled on the topic.[7] However, most of the studies since the 1980s have attempted to demolish Philippe Ariès's thesis from one angle or another. Denouncing the flashy tale of the false prophet, as Joel T. Rosenthal has called the famous French historian, was a necessary enterprise, but it is now time to ignore it and analyse for its own sake the richness and complexity of medieval discourses on the first age.[8] The two articles in this volume dealing with this issue charter unnavigated territory; the evidence studied here has been ignored so far possibly because, until recently, it produces readings too challenging for the tame portrayal of the first years that medievalists have wanted to offer.

Crawford raises the complex issue of infant burial in the centuries immediately before and after Christianization occurred in England. Given that maybe one-fifth to one-third of the medieval deaths concerned infants below one year old and given that so few infant bodies appear in cemeteries, it is important to discuss and interpret the remaining evidence. Crawford demonstrates that any consideration of the life cycle needs an exploration of how one phase is understood by its contextualization within the cycle as a whole: the start of the life cycle (birth) is invariably linked to consideration of adult practices and the end of the life cycle (death). She also offers an interesting exploration of the 'reality' of attitudes in Anglo-Saxon England towards the meaning of infancy and infant death.

[7] The list is too long to give all the titles. Among the most recent and valuable publications, see Classen, *Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, Rosenthal, *Essays on Medieval Childhood*, and MacLehose, *'A Tender Age'*.

[8] Rosenthal, 'Introduction', in *Essays on Medieval Childhood*, p. 1.

The childhood theme is continued in Dzon's examination of the late medieval anthropology of the 'wanton' child. A semantic survey of the adjectives 'wanton' and 'lascivious' reveals one premodern usage and context for describing 'typical' behaviour of children, including a demarcation of gendered norms. With a focus on a fifteenth-century apocryphal poem of the lives of Mary and Christ up to the beginning of Jesus's public ministry, comparisons are made with descriptions of the Christ Child and typical behaviours of boys and girls in a range of medieval sources, including historical, hagiographical, poetical, and conduct texts as well as visual images. The conclusion drawn is that in the Middle Ages there existed a much more complex and hybrid understanding of child behaviour than previously postulated by scholars. These archetypal behaviours were represented and discussed by medieval authors not so much for didactic or educative reasons, but for devotional celebration of the earliest, natural human life stage of the Christ Child.

Following this, two articles examine how the period of adolescence was constructed in narrative religious tales, encouraging modern readers to adopt a more inquisitive approach to medieval descriptions of this liminal stage between childhood and adulthood. A fair amount of scholarly work has been written recently on the lives of adolescents, whether they were young maidens, male or female servants, apprentices, knights to be, or university students.[9] The image of adolescents and youth in vernacular literature has also been discussed by literary scholars, though more might still be done in this regard.[10] Both authors, Cochelin and Sherwood, focus on how conceptions of adolescence were used by ecclesiastical authors but have each adopted a different approach.

A fresh perspective on adolescence is offered in Cochelin's investigation of how a new attitude emerges, at least temporarily, towards those in the late 'teens' at Cluny in the early twelfth century. Adolescents were now separated from the adult group to be associated with the children, at the same time as their (pious) revolts against authority were occasionally voiced. The sources used include the Cluniac customaries, which describe the daily activities of the monks in minute

[9] A few of the most recent titles are Lewis-Simpson, *Youth and Age in the Medieval North*; Dunlop, *The Late Medieval Interlude*; Phillips, *Medieval Maidens*; Karras, *From Boys to Men*.

[10] The interest of literary scholars in adolescence and youth is understandable given that young ones were the main heroes and, probably as well, the main audience of medieval vernacular literature. See for instance Flori, 'Qu'est-ce qu'un "Bacheler"?', and Schultz, 'Medieval Adolescence'. In the latter article, the author does not deny the presence of teenagers in medieval German narratives, but points to the fact that we cannot superimpose on these individuals our own, actual and often unrealistic, conception of adolescence. On the fact that courtly literature is therefore rarely conducive to the study of childhood (in opposition to young adulthood), see Classen, 'Introduction', in Classen, *Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, pp. 11 and 14–16.

detail, and the Cluniac *Lives* of saints, describing (exceptional but still human) characters evolving from birth to death, including the late teens. This study concludes that these changes in the conception of *adolescentia* might have been widespread within the twelfth-century Church.

By comparison, Sherwood's account offers another perspective, that of a nuanced and intimate portrait of the role ascribed to *adolescentia* in stories of conversion (from Judaism to Christianity). Here again is emphasized the dangers of conflating medieval and modern notions of adolescence. A cautious reading of documentary sources suggests that most of the Jewish converts between 1100 and 1250 did not turn to Christianity in nearly identical fits of adolescent pique.

Almost midway in the volume, Kuhn's article focuses on intergenerational relations in the late Middle Ages. Relations between parents and relatively young children have been discussed frequently by historians of childhood; however, here again, the tendency has been too much to answer back to Philippe Ariès's thesis.[11] The methodological approach adopted by Kuhn is quite different: using sources originating from familial conflict allows him to discover much of the 'invisible' value system and cultural imagination of the life cycle that would otherwise be lost. Kuhn's discourse analysis of some two hundred father-to-son letters of the mid-sixteenth-century German Tucher family and of contemporary dramatic representations of youth contributes to our knowledge about the general norms that underscored intergenerational communication. A relatively negative image of youth allowed fathers (or masters) to maintain strict supervision on their faraway sons (or pupils), even long past our own contemporary conception of youth.

In the next two articles, the focus is on the nuanced and sophisticated attitudes towards adulthood, specifically middle age. As Cochelin has pointed out in her introduction, middle age was strangely absent from the medieval definitions of the life cycle between the sixth and the early twelfth century, but makes frequent appearances in the later medieval definitions. This middle period in the medieval life cycle has been too often overlooked by scholars and begs for more inquiries. Youngs's article exposes how it is an elusive and conceptually slippery topic. She questions whether adulthood can be said to have constituted a distinct phase of the life course, with reference to both men and women. If so, to what extent

[11] Particularly problematic has been the tendency to find information on parent–child relations in medieval collections of miracles, given the way these sources are systematically constructed: for them to be meaningful, the beneficiaries of the supernatural intervention need to be completely distraught prior to the miracle, and then amazingly relieved and thankful. See for instance Krötzl, 'Parent-Child Relations', Finucane, *The Rescue of the Innocents*, and Lett, *L'Enfant des miracles*.

does it conform or contrast with our modern understanding of adulthood? Was medieval adulthood seen as representing the best years of life or the beginning of existential angst? The discussion draws on a range of sources for Western Europe, in various languages, during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Niebrzydowski also addresses such questions about the state of female middle age, but shifts her focus to a study of the influence of relationships not only between age and class (specifically the merchant class, which raises some interesting implicit connections with Kuhn's study of this class) but also between age and gender. Her study concentrates on the fluidity of 'age restrictions' by exploring Margery Kempe's physical and spiritual travelling at home and abroad in the context of other female pilgrims in the late Middle Ages. Subscribing partly to Anneke Mulder-Bakker's theory of the Wise old woman, Niebrzydowski demonstrates how much more agency was gained by medieval women once they had passed their childbearing ages. The majority of Kempe's experiences of pilgrimage occurred while she was in her forties (with a reprise in her sixties). Niebrzydowski's account encourages questions about medieval and modern accounts of medieval perceptions of the 'perfect' age, underlining the possible discrepancy between discourses and practices.

One further essay examines the end stage, old age. Given the drastic ageing of Western society, it is intriguing as to why the study of the history of old age has not so far encountered a success at least as momentous as has the history of childhood.[12] A few important volumes on medieval *senectus* have been published, but still much remains to be said, especially for the early Middle Ages.[13] Semper's article offers a perfect example of the rich diversity of discourses on old age in the Anglo-Saxon period, depending upon the literary genre considered and the language used. She illustrates how we need to be cautious of modern scholarship that usually conceives old age to be presented in negative physical, mental, and spiritual terms in Anglo-Saxon vernacular and monastic writings. Semper, by contrast, shows how the idea of the old man is a construct which is mixed in its sources and ancestry, and at times is contradictory in a diverse range of Anglo-Saxon sources. While old men would not find detailed discussion of the ageing process, or complex models for behaviour, in the texts they heard or read, there is more textual evidence available than one might think, and even within the

[12] See Albrecht Classen's title to his recent volume on old age as well as his introduction: Classen, *Old Age in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*.

[13] The most recent and extremely rich collection on the topic is Classen, *Old Age in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*. One of the very first volumes on the issue and still useful is Sheehan, *Aging and the Aged*.

limits of generic expectation it is possible to read attitudes, stereotypes, interests, problems, and subversions in relation to the nature and qualities of old men.

The last essay (Smyth) surveys the range of time referents that are employed to mark the various stages of the life cycle in fifteenth-century English poems and dramatic spectacles, with a special focus on the work of the most prolific author of the age — John Lydgate. In tandem, the comparative approach is used to explore the subtle nuances of similarity and difference whenever such referents are used in relation to different life-cycle scales — be that a life cycle of a specific individual, Everyman's journey in life, or the ageing and maturity of a nation or even of all world history. The conclusion is that each manifestation of life-cycle markings requires sensitive reading in relation to other instances of usage and a variety of contexts, from intratextual context to genre, from a biographical reading to a historicized one, from a biological interpretation of the ages to a moral one, and from a structural to a descriptive reading of the age referents. This essay highlights the medieval tendency to play with pluralities in age descriptions as well as the pluralities in defining age states.

Hence the volume begins with a claim towards a hitherto unforeseen narrative of continuity and ends with a celebration of change: Cochelin's introduction and Smyth's conclusion present two fundamentally different approaches and methodologies to study medieval life cycles; however they are inherently complementary and offer novel (even if contrasting) results. The introduction demonstrates that, in contradistinction to claims to date, definitions of the human life cycle were more uniform during the early and central Middle Ages, and also noticeably different from earlier and later periods. Such a recognition can enable us to unearth much more about the beliefs and ways of life of medieval (ecclesiastical) individuals. The volume ends with a focus on the late Middle Ages that counterbalances the introduction by demonstrating, in contrast, the variety of definitions of the life cycle that can be found in fifteenth-century literature, even in the writings of one sole medieval author. Variations are based on the entity of whose life cycle is discussed (whether human or world history be the subject), on the literary genre analysed, and, not least, on the sensibility of the artist. Thus this book presents novel questions (such as the importance of mischievousness in the medieval perception of childhood or the place given to adulthood in the medieval life cycle) in combination with a plurality of innovative methodologies. The collective result is a narrative about the open-ended possibilities regarding continuity and change in attitudes towards and representations of the life cycle in the medieval period.

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Introduction: Pre-Thirteenth-Century Definitions of the Life Cycle

Isabelle Cochelin

Studies on the medieval treatments of the ages of life have so far focused mostly on the origin, literary context, diffusion, and posterity of specific divisions of the life cycle, such as the four ages in relation to the four humours and the four seasons.[1] Instead, presented here is a chronological list of various types of definitions in order to observe a common thread between most of them that might help us to understand how medieval authors conceived of the life cycle. Their conceptions were far more consistent, meaningful, and intriguing than previous studies have let us believe.[2]

In the following pages are listed more than eighty life-cycle definitions found in a variety of sources between the third century and 1200. They are summarized into two tables, preceded by some explanations and followed by a few words on their respective sources. I collected all the definitions that I was able to find from the Middle Ages, prior to the thirteenth century.[3] Most of these were mentioned in secondary sources, first and foremost the two books on the medieval ages of man published by Elisabeth Sears and John Anthony Burrow in 1986.[4] All of

[1] See for instance Bagliani, 'Âges de la vie'.

[2] A recent example of an author qualifying medieval definitions of the life cycle as mostly 'meaningless outside the philosophical framework to which they belong': Goldberg, 'Life and Death', pp. 413–14.

[3] I did not look systematically for definitions of the life cycle from Late Antiquity, so the fourteen that are in the first table, from Tertullian to Augustine, are simply indicative and not representative of the definitions of this period.

[4] Sears, *The Ages of Man*; Burrow, *The Ages of Man*. The other most important studies used

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them have been traced back to their original source, unless it was unpublished.[5] I probably missed a fair number of such definitions, and some of those I missed might present very different age divisions.[6] Yet even this incomplete sample, gathered in two tables and accompanied by my attempt at interpretation, will provide opportunities for both an interesting foray into the mental world view of medieval ecclesiastics and observation upon how they might have perceived the course of their own lives, if lived fully and not abruptly interrupted by sickness, accident, or violent death. I should add, even though this is a given, that with only one exception (Hildegard of Bingen), all of these authors were male, that a large majority of them were members of the Church, and that their definitions refer, probably, mainly to the cycles of men's lives.[7]

The reading of the two tables is quite straightforward. From the second column onwards, there is one definition per row. The first column provides the name of the author of the life-cycle definition that follows on the right. Occasionally, an author's name precedes more than one row; it means that he gave more than one definition. That was by no means exceptional, and the divergences between the definitions of one author are quite useful to understand what terms were perceived as more or less synonymic; I wrote 'more or less' given that, possibly, in different contexts, an author conceived the life cycle somewhat differently.[8]

are de Ghellinck, '*Iuventus*, *gravitas*, *senectus*'; Archambault, 'The Ages of Man and the Ages of the World'; Goodich, *From Birth to Old Age*.

[5] I thank Christian Knudsen for helping me revise and update the work done many years ago, in my PhD thesis: Cochelin, 'Enfants, jeunes et vieux au monastère', pp. 16–114; available from <http://www.proquest.com> (publication number AAT NQ21445). I also thank Nora Berend, Albrecht Diem, Joe Goering, Jacques Ménard, Bert Roest, David Townsend, Michael Wayne, and Natalie Zemon Davis for their comments.

[6] I have ignored the definitions offered on *rotae* (diagrams in the shape of wheels), discussed by Elizabeth Sears, because these visual definitions were not always easy to transcribe into linear and written definitions. I have also chosen not to associate a definition with a given author that he attributes to, and copies verbatim from, another author. For instance, I ignored Ambrose presenting Hippocrates' and Solo's definitions of the ages. Ambrose, *Epist.* XLIV (to Horontianus), in Ambrose, *Epistulae et acta*, ed. by Faller, pp. 222–23; Ambrose, *Discorsi e lettere*, ed. by Faller, letter 31, pp. 306–07. On this definition, see Lamirande, 'Les Âges de l'homme', pp. 230–31.

[7] However, on this complex topic, see the important discussion by Youngs in her article in this volume.

[8] See for instance Hugh of Saint-Victor's definitions. When one author had given the exact same definition twice, overall a quite rare phenomenon, I usually avoided copying it twice to avoid redundancy. I only did it when this same author was giving many different definitions, in order to underline the importance of this reiterated definition compared to others. See for instance below the analysis of Hildegard of Bingen's definitions of the life cycle.

Table 1. Definitions of the life cycle found in the medieval West prior to the thirteenth century

Tertullian (d. *c.* 230)	Infantia	Pueritia	Adolescentia	Iuuenta	Senecta	
Ambrose (d. 397)	Pueritia Pueri		Iuuentus Iuuenes/ ephebi/ adulescentes/ iuniores		Senectus Senes/ uiri / seniores	
	Pueritia		Adolescentia	Iuuentus	Maturitas/senectus	
Prudentius (d. *c.* 410)	Infantia	Pueritia	Iuuenta	Roboris a.	Senectus	
	Pueri		Ephebi	Uiri	Decrepita senecta	
Jerome (396 / 398)	Infans	Puer	Iuuenis	Robustae aetatis	Senex	
	Ex utero matris		A pubertate	Matura aetate	Iam declinante ad senium	Ultima senectute
Augustine (d. 430)	Infantia	Pueritia	Adolescentia	Iuuentus	Senioris a./ grauitas	Senectus/ deterior a.
	Infantia	Pueritia	Adolescentia	Iuuentus	Grauitas	**60** Senectus
	Infantes	Pueri	Adolescentes	Iuuenes	Seniores	Senes
	Pueri		Adolescentuli	Iuuenes	Grauiores	Decrepiti
	Recentes ab utero matris	Pueri	Iuuenes		Uergentes in senium	Omnino Decrepiti
	Infantes	Pueritia	Adolescentia	Iuuentus	Senectus	
Caesarius (d. 542)	Infantia	Pueritia	Adulescentia	Iuuentus	Senectus	Decrepita a.
Gregory (d. 604)	Pueritia		Adolescentia	Iuuentus	Senectus	a. decrepita/ a. ueterana
	Pueritia		Adulescentia/ Iuuentus		Senectus	
	Infantia	Pueritia	Adolescentia	Iuuentus	Senectus	
Isidore (d. 636)	A rudimentis infantiae		In adolescentia	In iuuentutis aetate	Iam a iuuentute in senectutem declinantes	Decrepiti
	Infantia	**7** Pueritia	**14** Adolescentia	**28** Iuuentus	**50** Grauitas	**70** Senectus (ending with senium)
	Infantia	**7** Pueritia	**14** Adolescentia	**28** Iuuentus	**49** Senectus	**77** Senium
Eugenius (d. 657)	Infantia	Pueritia	A. adulta	Iuuenta	Senecta	Senium
Bede (d. 735)	Infantia	Pueritia	Adolescentia	Iuuenilis a.	Grauis senectus	Decrepita a.
	Infantes		Adolescentes		Transgressores	Senes
Alcuin (d. 804)	Infantia	Pueritia	Adolescentia	Iuuentus	Grauitas	Senectus
Hrabanus (d. 856)	Infantia	**7** Pueritia	**14** Adolescentia	**28** Iuuentus	**50** Grauitas/ a. senioris	**70** Senectus
	Infantia	Pueritia	Adolescentia	Iuuenilis aetas	Quasi senilis a.	Aetas decrepita
Hildemar (845–50)	Infantia	**7** Pueritia	**14** Adolescentia	**28** Iuuentus	**56** Senectus	**70** decrepita a.
MS Fulda (9th cent.)	Infantia	**7–8** Pueritia	**14** a. adulescentis	**28** Iuuentus	**50** a. senioris	**70** Senectus
Remigius (d. 908)	Infantia	Pueritia	Adolescentia	Iuuentus		
	Pueritia		Adolescentia	Iuuentus	Senectus	

Table 1. Definitions of the life cycle found in the medieval West prior to the thirteenth century *(continued)*

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ceded advanced old age, which was generally named *senium* or *aetas decrepita*, but sometimes *senectus*.[9]

The boxes shaded in pale grey have content that potentially does not, but probably does, fit with the explanation of the medieval life cycle offered below. To come back to the issue of *grauitas*, from the sixth century onwards, I have only shaded it in Alcuin's definition, as he did not provide a starting age for this particular stage. Hence, even though there are good chances for his definition of *grauitas* to be typical, as explained above, I have shaded the box pale grey to illustrate the possibility of a divergence. At other times, the box is shaded in pale grey because the divergence is probably only superficial. The explanation for this divergence is provided in the presentation of the definition at the end of the introduction. To give an example: a tenth-century manuscript from Chartres seems to offer unusual age-limits in its definition of the ages, but it can probably be explained by a small scribal mistake.

The boxes shaded in darker grey do not fit with the model explained below. It is striking that all are to be found either prior to the fifth century or past the first two decades of the twelfth century. One such 'aberration' is among the four definitions given by the English anonymous in his *Tractatus de Quaternario* (*c.* 1120–30). However, the author insisted on the fact that this definition was not his own. He probably borrowed it from non-Western scientific authors and was unconvinced of its validity.[10]

Table 1 shows that it is possible to discern a 'universal' life-cycle definition, flexible enough to work in almost all situations, as long as one considers only the thirty-four definitions dating from between the sixth century to (approximately) 1120.[11] As one might expect, all of them were written by members of the clergy. Findings presented in Table 2, concerning the definitions of five non-Western scientific authors translated into Latin between the late eleventh and the late twelfth centuries, must be regrouped to the results of the twelfth-century authors of Table 1, for reasons that will become obvious below. The life-cycle definitions harvested from Late Antiquity and from the twelfth-century Renaissance (minus its first two decades, but including Table 2) display far more variability and

[9] However, regarding the age limits of Augustine's *grauitas*, see below, in the explanations under his name.

[10] See below the explanations of *Tractatus de Quaternario*.

[11] There is no need to specify that I do not believe that the definitions of the life cycle were suddenly conceived differently after 31 December 1119. Nonetheless I needed a limit, even if somewhat arbitrary, to explain the change that I noticed in the definitions, and Table 1 suggested this one.

Table 2. Definitions of the life cycle found in non-Western sources translated into Latin prior to the thirteenth century

Ali ibn al-Abbas (trans. end 11th cent.)	Pueritia = Infantia+ (15) [pueritia siue adolescentia]				**30** Iuuentus	**35/40** Senectus	**45/50** or **60** Senium	
Iohannicius (trans. end 11th cent.)	Adolescentia				**25/30** Iuuentus	**35/40** Senectus	**55/60** Senium	
Ali (trans. 1127)	Pueritie a.				Iuuentus	Grandiorum etas	Senectus	
Ptolemy (trans. 1138)	Infantia	**4** Pueritia	**14** Adolescentia	**22** Iuuentus		**41** Uirilis a.	**56** Senectus	**68** Senium
Avicenna (trans. end 12th cent.)	Aetas adholendi/ aetas adolescentie				**30** Aetas consistendi/ aetas pulcritudinis	**35/40** a. minuendi cum uirtus non admittitur/ a. senectutis	**60** Aetas minuendi cum manifesta uirtutis debilitate/ aetas senium	

unpredictability. Given the impressive number of definitions from the twelfth century alone compared to the preceding six, this variability might simply be a question of sample size. However, this explanation would not explain the homogeneity of the definitions of the previous centuries. Others might claim that this same homogeneity is proof of the stereotypical nature of these definitions: they are easy to fit into a formula because they were essentially symbolic, created to be linked for instance with the Trinity or the four seasons, but bearing no connection with the complexity of human life. The point is true, to some extent, but given that most scholars have rejected these medieval definitions because they found them too disparate, should we really reject them as well when they are found to be too homogeneous?

As the tables show, the thirty-four definitions from this middle period have two striking characteristics, including one difficult to understand either from a twenty-first-century or from a late antique point of view: namely the absence of a middle age (the occasional *roboris aetas* or *uirilis aetas* of Antiquity) between youth and old age, and the presence of a subdivided old age. If such characteristics existed from the end of Antiquity to the central Middle Ages, it is worthwhile to ponder their significance.

Almost all the definitions during these six centuries include two partitions that were clearly quite essential for the society that imagined them — in Table 1, these partitions are marked by vertical straight lines, with the other partitions marked by dashed lines. The first fundamental partition distinguishes childhood (*pueritia*) from the subsequent ages, while the second distinguishes *iuuentus* from *senectus* (also called episodically *grauitas* or *senioris aetas*). Interestingly, these two

divisions, which distinguished childhood from adulthood and also divided adulthood into two ages (*iuuentus* and *senectus*), are the oldest that can be found in the history of the Latin language with respect to the life cycle of man.[12]

It is true that most medieval definitions divide the first major phase of the life cycle, namely *pueritia*, into two, *infantia* and *pueritia*. However, almost a quarter of the definitions have this first part of human life simply called *pueritia*, without any internal subdivision. In a few cases, it is called *infantia*, *prima aetas*, or some equivalent name. Indeed, monastic customaries describing in great details the daily life of the monks, the medieval primary sources with which I am the most familiar, indifferently call the oblates (children given to the monasteries before adulthood) *pueri* or *infantes*, as if these two terms were mere synonyms.[13] This might just express the adult monks' perception of the inadequacy of oblates compared to more experienced monks: even when they were ten or twelve they were still considered mere *infantes*. More probably it means that the monks saw the oblates as their own (spiritual and communal) progeny; indeed in the contemporary charters kept at Cluny the term *infantes* is used primarily to refer to someone's offspring, whether of the giver, of the receiver, or of the serfs given away, and whether these children were infant or not.[14] Still, when used in reference to the chronological age, the terms *puer* and *infans* were often treated as synonymous.[15] Other scholars have remarked on the use of the term *pueri* to name chil-

[12] Slusanski, 'Le Vocabulaire latin des *gradus aetatum*', pp. 570–71. With time, other divisions were added. The most important age-limits in Roman Antiquity were: fifteen, when one started to wear the *toga uirilis* and left *pueritia* to enter *iuuentus*; forty-five, when one stopped the active military service; and then sixty, when all military service ended (Slusanski, 'Le Vocabulaire latin des *gradus aetatum*', p. 573). On the other divisions with *infantia* and *adolescentia*, see Slusanski, 'Le Vocabulaire latin des *gradus aetatum*', p. 576.

[13] The list and references to these customaries are given in my article later in this volume. I reached the same conclusion consulting the contemporary Cluniac hagiographical sources, except that the term *infans*/*infantes* is used for very young children, rarely aged more than seven; the list of these sources is also given in my article in this volume. For two of these *vitae*, see also Carozzi, 'De l'enfance à la maturité', p. 105.

[14] I researched the 550 usages of the term *infans* and 62 usages of the term *puer* through the website *CCE: Cartae cluniacenses electronicae* (Institut für Frühmittelalterforschung, 2009), available at <http://www.uni-muenster.de/Fruehmittelalter/Projekte/Cluny/CCE/Welcome.htm> [accessed 15 June 2012]. The site presents the content of the six volumes of *Recueil des chartes de l'abbaye de Cluny*, ed. by Bruel and Bernard.

[15] The Cluniac charters, unlike the Cluniac customaries and hagiographical sources, give only rare examples of this phenomenon, but these are very short texts in comparison, with few evocations of children. However, see *Recueil des chartes de l'abbaye de Cluny*, ed. by Bruel and

dren regardless of whether they were above or below the age of seven, while *infans* was used more to designate the very young children, less than seven.[16] Therefore it seems safe to affirm that the life cycle was perceived as consisting of one large first phase, routinely called *pueritia*, often but not always subdivided into the two ages of *infantia* and *pueritia*. During the early and central Middle Ages, childhood was clearly distinguished from the rest of one's life.[17] I have called these remaining years, for lack of a better word, adulthood.[18]

After *pueritia*, the remaining years are always subdivided. The way the divisions are made can vary, but one division is systematically present: it takes place around forty-nine years of age, between two ages usually called *iuuentus* and *senectus* (this latter also being called on occasion *grauitas* or *aetas senioris*). Given that the specific nature of this partition is relatively late in the life cycle, implying it was not a simple end to youth (at least in terms of a modern conception of youth), and that there are various synonyms used to name the age after forty-nine, I propose to read these two ages as young adulthood (*iuuentus*) and old adulthood (*senectus*, *grauitas*, *aetas senioris*), instead of translating them respectively with 'youth' and 'old age'.

In the same way as *pueritia* and *infantia* are sometimes banded together into one larger *pueritia*, *adolescentia* and *iuuentus* are sometimes congregated into

Bernard, no. 1206, in which the donor reserves to himself one *puer* from a serf family, but gives the other children (*alios infantes*) and the parents to Cluny. It is to the father to decide which child will remain with the donor.

[16] Regarding classical Latin, and the fact that *infantes* can refer to all children while *pueri* means 'invariably' all children below their seventeenth year, see Slusanski, 'Le Vocabulaire latin des *gradus aetatum*', pp. 360–63. The same author points to the fact that the derivative use of the term *puer*, to designate the slave, was to be found first and foremost in non-literary texts (p. 360). For medieval Latin, see Sigal, 'Le Vocabulaire de l'enfance et de l'adolescence', p. 150. Lett, *L'Enfant des miracles*, pp. 43–50, claims that *infans* was only used to designate children below the age of three (however, see p. 39), while *puer* was employed for all children, even the ones younger than seven years old.

[17] It is not necessary to point out one more time that Philippe Ariès made a mistake when claiming that childhood was conceived as a very short phase in human life during the early and central Middle Ages: Ariès, *L'Enfant et la vie familiale*, pp. 53–55; English translation (based on the first edition, and not the second), Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, trans. by Baldick. This is a peculiar claim given that he knew of medieval definitions of the life cycle and admitted that, even if they seem meaningless for us today, they were significant of medieval world views (Ariès, *L'Enfant et la vie familiale*, pp. 34–40). Among the numerous criticisms of his study on childhood, I would like to point to a relatively recent, original, and well-balanced one: Goldberg, Riddy, and Typer, 'Introduction'.

[18] Deborah Youngs gives a more precise meaning to 'adulthood' in her article in this volume.

iuuentus;[19] and *senectus* and *senium* (occasionally called *aetas decrepita* or now and again followed by such an age) are sometimes grouped into *senectus*. Here again, the nouns and adjectives associated with these ages seem to confirm these occasional groupings: an *adolescens* can also be called a *iuuenis*,[20] while the term *senex* is the main one to describe an individual in the last stages of his life.[21]

[19] This phenomenon can be observed in the writings of Ambrose, Prudentius, Jerome, Augustine, Gregory the Great, Bede, Honorius Augustodunensis, Guillaume de Conches, Hildegard, and Jean Beleth; but one should always ponder if some of these authors, especially the twelfth-century ones, could have conceived of a longer *adolescentia* subsumed partly into *pueritia*. One should also note that Gregory the Great felt obliged to justify his grouping of *adolescentia* with *iuuentus*, saying 'adolescentia vel juventus, quae auctoritate sacri eloquii unum sunt, dicente Salomone: *Laetare juvenis in adolescentia tua* (Ecl. 11, 9)' (*Homilia* XIII, in Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Evangelia*, ed. by Etaix, p. 92). Julian of Vezelay and the *Tractatus quidam de Philosophia et partibus eius* (second half of the twelfth century) had recourse to the same biblical passage.

[20] In the Cluniac customaries, a monk having just reached puberty is usually called a *iuuenis*, rather than an *adolescens*; see for instance note 17 in my article on adolescence in this volume. One charter kept in Cluny was dated the year Louis IV became king (936) and calls him a *iuuenis*, while he had just turned fifteen, and another charter made in the year that Louis V died (987) specifies that he was *in adolescentia*, as he was twenty years old at the time (*Recueil des chartes de l'abbaye de Cluny*, ed. by Bruel and Bernard, nos 449 and 1728; see also no. 3896). See also Carozzi, 'De l'enfance à la maturité', p. 105, and Lett, *L'Enfant des miracles*, p. 51. On the very complex competition between the two nouns *adolescens* and *iuuenis* in the literary sources in classical Latin, nicknamed by Slusanski the 'rise and fall' ('grandeur et décadence') of *adolescens*, see Slusanski, 'Le Vocabulaire latin des *gradus aetatum*', pp. 364–66 and p. 439. What concerns us here is that these two terms were often synonymous, and not limited to the age limits sixteen (seventeen) to thirty for the first one, and thirty to forty-five for the second (see the ironic comments by Axelson, 'Die Synonime *adulescens* und *iuuenis*'). Indeed *iuuenis* 'couvre toute la période entre 17 et 45 ans' (Slusanski, 'Le Vocabulaire latin des *gradus aetatum*', p. 439). It is also worth noting that *adolescens* meant — occasionally, and only during the Early Empire, not earlier — someone in the first stage of youth, still dependent on the recommendations of a spiritual adviser: 'première étape de la jeunesse encore hésitante et dépendant des conseils d'un directeur de conscience' (Slusanski, 'Le Vocabulaire latin des *gradus aetatum*', p. 365; see also pp. 437–38).

[21] If the early and central Middle Ages defined two stages for old adulthood, at first with some difficulties (see below), no substantive imposed itself successfully to be used in company with *senex*, to refer to the other stage. Some authors, like Augustine, used *senior* for an individual aged between forty-nine and seventy years old, and *senex* for the older one (see below in my discussion of Augustine's definitions of the ages). Given the importance of *seniores* in the monastic vocabulary, the choice can be easily understood. It already existed and was used in the Roman legal and military language, in opposition to *iuniores* and/or *iuuenes*; from there, it was adopted occasionally to designate individuals younger than the *senes* (Axelson, 'Die Synonime *adulescens* und *iuuenis*', p. 8, and Slusanski, 'Le Vocabulaire latin des *gradus aetatum*', pp. 564–65). However it was a poor choice from a grammatical point of view (as it means literally 'the elder') and, understandably, did not take root.

In other words, between the sixth and the early twelfth centuries, the life cycle can contain three, four, five, six, or even seven ages, because the three main phases, *pueritia*, *iuuentus*, and *senectus*, can each be divided into two and, exceptionally for *senectus*, even into three ages. A life cycle of three is comprised of the three main phases; one of four means that one of the three phases has been subdivided, and so on. Whatever the number of subdivisions, we are still facing one unique, if very flexible, way of conceiving the ages of man. The main characteristics of this definition of the life cycle prevalent from the sixth to the early twelfth century — early entrance into adulthood, no middle age, and a bipartite old adulthood/old age — are somewhat astonishing from a twenty-first-century point of view, but they become more understandable if one considers the lives and ideals of the ones who imagined them.

It is easy to downplay these divisions, and think of them as simple mind games devoid of any reality, based on the sacred numbers of one, three, and seven. But in Christian numerology, a religious meaning can be attached to most numbers up to twelve. Why then did the medieval authors privilege seven and multiples of seven to define the ages of life (seven, fourteen, twenty-eight, forty-nine, etc.)? These definitions of the life cycle were all produced by members of the Church, many of them monks, and most can be explained in an ecclesiastic, or at least a male monastic, context. Seven is the average age when a child would habitually leave the family home to study and maybe become an oblate. A good illustration of this phenomenon is offered in the story of the child whose mother had promised him to the Church after he had been miraculously resurrected by Saint Wilfrid, the eighth-century Archbishop of York. The saint had asked her to bring him in once he had reached the age of seven.[22] More generally, all childhoods were normally divided in the Middle Ages (as is the case today) into two stages with a flexible boundary between them: free play, followed by the beginnings of learning the rudiments of one's future career.[23] This first phase, of the first fifteen years, was one of full dependency.[24]

[22] Stephanus, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, ed. and trans. by Colgrave, pp. 38–41; on this episode, see also Foot, *Monastic Life in Anglo-Saxon England*, and the article by Sally Crawford in this volume. For other justifications for the age limit of seven between *infantia* and *pueritia*, see Metz, 'L'Enfant dans le droit canonique médiéval', p. 43, Metz, 'L'Accession des mineurs à la cléricature', and James, 'Childhood and Youth in the Early Middle Ages', p. 23.

[23] See for instance the childhood of late medieval English peasants in Hanawalt, *The Ties that Bound*, p. 182 and the one of noble Carolingians in Garver, 'Carolingian Conceptions of Childhood', p. 72.

[24] The references to *pueri* in the Cluniac charters confirm that individuals in the first phase of their life cycle are not actors. In some rare cases, they might own lands (*Recueil des chartes de*

I discuss the age limits of *adolescentia* in my article in this volume. The lower one, fourteen/fifteen, is the age when the oblates joined the ranks of the adult monks, with or without a profession ritual.[25] It was also the age of puberty.[26] Socially, legally, and physically, it was the beginning of adulthood.[27] No other specific monastic rite of passage can be associated with the other divisions, which mean that the other numbers (twenty-eight/twenty-nine, forty-nine/fifty, and seventy) were more symbolic indicators of life-cycle transitions than rigid barriers in the monastic life. Yet their symbolic value does not reside only in the neatness

l'abbaye de Cluny, ed. by Bruel and Bernard, no. 3761, but *puellus* might here be a surname; nos 2135 and 3747) and, less exceptionally, be a witness and add their signatures to the bottom of a charter (for instance nos 2725, 2888, 3348, 3438, 3829, 3850, and 3915; see also nos 3881 and 3357), but they do not act. The only exception, to be found occasionally in charters from the late twelfth century onwards, concerns the *pueri monachi* of a Cluniac dependency revolting side by side with older monks, but these *pueri* could be sixteen and older (see my article in this volume). The analysis of the use of *infans* is more difficult, given its broader meaning of *infans* as (occasionally more specifically male) offspring, but also as the son or daughter (*infans*, *infanta*, or *infantissa*) of a Spanish king, whatever their physical age (for the latter cases, see nos 3533, 3927, 3970, 3995, 4038, 4072, and 4402). Therefore one can find *infantes* giving or selling properties side by side with their parents (for example nos 36, 206, 1115, and 2377).

[25] Benedict of Nursia does not talk about a profession for the oblates; however he does distinguish between the monks aged up to fifteen, who are under the surveillance of all other monks and can be punished by them all, and the older monks who can only be punished by the abbot or with his permission: Benedict of Nursia, *Regula Benedicti*, ed. by de Vogüé, LXIII. 18–19 and LXX. 1–5. Mayke de Jong found that some monasteries recorded the date of oblation and others the date of profession (of their adult newcomers and of their oblates already present): de Jong, *In Samuel's Image*, pp. 105–23. I believe that the oblates of the monasteries recording the dates of oblation might still have benefitted from some form of change in status marking their entrance into adulthood, and the oblates of the monasteries recording profession might still have been perceived as monks prior to their profession. See Stoertz, 'Adolescence and Authority', pp. 126–28.

[26] On fourteen as the age of puberty according to Roman law and classical canon law, see Metz, 'L'Enfant dans le droit canonique médiéval', p. 21.

[27] If fifteen was usually in medieval Western Europe the age when a teenager would inherit his father's title and land, the situation in England was more fluid. Sally Crawford speaks of the age ten to twelve in burial sites and legal codes of the Anglo-Saxon period: Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 48 and pp. 52–53. However, at least from the Conquest onwards, a young man had to be twenty-one to inherit the feudal tenures of his deceased father; see Orme, *Medieval Children*, pp. 325–26; Hanawalt, *Growing up in Medieval London*, p. 203; Goldberg, 'Life and Death', pp. 421–22. In Byzantium, a practice inherited from Roman Antiquity meant that legal dependence lasted until twenty-five; Hennessy, *Images of Children in Byzantium*, p. 11. For Iceland and the importance of twelve, sixteen, and fifteen, but especially the latter, as age thresholds between childhood and adulthood, see Callow, 'Transitions to Adulthood in Early Icelandic Society', pp. 49–51.

of their numbers. The late twenties indicate that the early entrance into adulthood, needed in a world where (spiritual) elders might die suddenly, was counterbalanced by a delayed recognition of a fully authoritative mind and voice.[28] It might as well have been conceived to be the end of men's physical growth.[29] It could also have symbolized the approximate time when most oblates would have become ordained priests.

Fifty was the age at which, according to Gregory the Great in his much read *Life* of Saint Benedict of Monte-Cassino, the mind was finally able to master the passions of the body, and the person ready to rule over others.[30] One finds the same idea in Honorius Augustodunensis's *Gemma animae*: he links *senectus* with None, when many are raised by God to lead over men.[31] As Philippa Semper's article in this volume demonstrates, old age was often associated with spiritual strength in religious sources of sixth- to eleventh-century Britain. It is significant that this first old adulthood is sometimes simply called *grauitas*. The next threshold, seventy (or eighty), is easy to understand given the lack of ambiguity

[28] On the fact that the young nobles might wait a long time a settled position in life, sometimes until their late twenties, see Innes, '"A Place of Discipline"'. This issue of physical, mental, and spiritual growth during the late teens and the twenties is more fully discussed in my article on *adolescentia* in this volume.

[29] See for instance Macrobius, *Commentarii in somnium Scipionis*, ed. and trans. by Armisen-Marchetti, I. 6. 72, p. 43 ; English translation: Macrobius, *Commentary on 'The Dream of Scipio'*, trans. by Stahl, I. 6. 72, p. 114.

[30] Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, ed. by de Vogüé, lb. II. 2. 4, pp. 138–41; English translation in *Early Christian Lives*, ed. and trans. by White, p. 169. For a similar understanding of fifty as the age when one can become a master to others, but partly challenged and lowered to the forties to justify the fact that Christ started to preach earlier, see Irenaeus of Lyon, *Adversus haereses*, ed. by Rousseau and Doutreleau, II. 22. 3, pp. 222–24. For Aristotle, forty-nine corresponds to the age when one finally reaches the mental prime of life (while the physical prime of life is reached between thirty or thirty-five): *Rhetoric*, II. 14. Interestingly, according to Slusanski, ('Le Vocabulaire latin des *gradus aetatum*', p. 448), *iuuentus* defined predominantly until the second century, not an age, but an age-group, comprising the younger people obliged to obey and execute the orders of the magistrates and the senate. However, *iuuentus* was occasionally associated with (lay) ruling in the Middle Ages, as a simple glance through E. Sears's index would indicate (Sears, *The Ages of Man*, p. 230).

[31] '[...] per *Nonam*, senectutem notamus, qua plerique ex clero ecclesiasticas dignitates quasi graviora vineae pondera subimus. Convenit itaque nos in hac hora Deum magnificare, qua nos voluit super plebem suam exaltare.' Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae*, ed. by Migne, lb. II, c. 54, col. 633. However the canonical age to become a bishop was thirty, not fifty, an age limit much closer to the age limit between *adolescentia* and *iuuentus* (Metz, 'L'Enfant dans le droit canonique médiéval', p. 13).

of one of the names associated with the age that follows: *decrepita aetas*. Starting remarkably late, this last divide might well mark the moment in one's life when, for monks at least, it was time to retire once and for all into the infirmary.[32]

This almost systematic division of the last phase into two ages, sometimes even three, is quite remarkable. It is less common in Late Antiquity and after *c*. 1120, as if, in these periods, *senectus* was more often perceived as just one long old age, from its lower age limit, often around forty-nine, to its end, death. Indeed authors like Augustine and Gregory the Great had to turn to Greek to explain to their readers why they chose to present two old ages (or rather — to continue with the terminology I have employed so far — two stages in old adulthood), instead of the usual one. This is a telling indication that this division of *senectus* was a novelty in Latin.[33] When necessary, the most prevalent solution was to use *aetas decrepita* or *senium* as a stage distinct from or concluding *senectus*. It seems that by the time of Isidore of Seville, if not earlier, this possible distinction between the two terms *senectus* and *senium* was accepted by most authors, at least until the beginning of the twelfth century.[34] Hence, for most of the ecclesiastics of the early and central Middle Ages, the phase after forty-nine consisted of at least two periods, if not three. The first of these, from fifty to seventy or eighty, was not perceived as old age *stricto sensu*, as is illustrated by the fact that it is distinguished from a last stage and is sometimes called *grauitas* or *aetas senioris*, rather than *senectus*. Quite probably because these ecclesiastical authors did not normally have to perform the harsh physical actions demanded from their contemporaries, the warriors and the peasants, they were able to distinguish between an active advanced age and old age properly speaking. One cannot help but make a parallel with the two phases of old age evoked now by some specialists of old age in the Western world: the young (active and healthy) old age and the old old age.[35]

[32] See for instance Cristiani, 'Integration and Marginalization'.

[33] Augustine, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, ed. by Martín, lb. I, c. 23, 39, p. 410 (explanations partly reused by Isidore of Seville in his *Etymologiarum*: Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum*, ed. by Lindsay, XI. 2. 6) and Augustine, *Enarrationes in psalmos LI–C*, ed. by Dekkers and Fraipont, *Ps.* LXX, *sermo* II. 4, pp. 962–63. Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Evangelia*, ed. by Etaix, *Homilia* XIX. 2, pp. 144–45.

[34] This understanding of *senium* as a later age than *senectus* is illustrated in the eighth- or ninth-century glossary *Glossae Abauus*, ed. by Goetz and Lowe, p. 390. Conversely, D. Slusanski remarks that in classical Latin, '*senium* ne semble jamais avoir signifié "vieillesse"', meaning rather decrepitude ('déchéance, dépérissement'; Slusanski, 'Le Vocabulaire latin des *gradus aetatum*', pp. 566–67 and 572).

[35] One of the first to discuss this division was Neugarten, 'Age Groups in American Society',

Perhaps the most striking feature of these early medieval definitions is the absence of an adulthood in the strictest sense. If I can be forgiven a bad pun, there was no middle age during the early and central Middle Ages.[36] I was expecting to find this theoretical summit of a person's life curve between youth and old age, as can be found in some definitions of the ages during Antiquity and from the 1120s onwards. Its absence is intriguing.[37] Table 1 would indicate that the first reappearance of a middle age dates from the middle of the eleventh century, with Papias Grammaticus, but this author seemed to have preferred the term *iuuentus* for this same age. Indeed, for the next few decades, *uirilis aetas* remains simply an exceptional second name for *iuuentus* and does not have an independent life of its own.[38] One has to wait for Pseudo-Bede and Hugh of Saint-Victor to observe its 'emancipation' into a clear middle age, distinct from youth and old age.

This absence of a middle age is probably inseparable from an ecclesiastical perspective on human life. First, if one conceives of this middle age as the phase of full (mental and physical) independence in the life cycle, then one might wonder

p. 187. See also more recently Baltes and Smith, 'New Frontiers in the Future of Aging'. I thank Aline Charles for this last reference.

[36] Regarding the concept of middle age in the latter Middle Ages, see the articles by Deborah Youngs and Sue Niebrzydowski in this volume.

[37] Maybe more intriguing is our conviction that there should be a middle age, while obviously no one substantive was ever created to designate it, even up until today, at least in English and French. In the Cluniac hagiographical sources (discussed further at length in my article in this volume), I found only one reference to a middle age, but the genesis of this sentence and its exact phrasing are quite telling: in his *Vita Maioli* dating from 999–1010, Syrus refers to the whole of society, by mentioning one representative of each age group, the *infans*, the *senex*, the *iuuenis*, and the one in the median age, *if* there is such an age dividing the *iuuenis* from the *senex* ('hoc tuncque infansque senexque, hoc iuuenis, medium et si quid iuuenemque senemque dispecit'); Syrus, *Vita Sancti Maioli*, ed. by Iogna-Prat, p. 255. D. Iogna-Prat, who edited the *Vita*, pointed to the fact that the same hesitation was borrowed from Heric of Auxerre (*Agni immaculate*, ed. by Iogna-Prat, p. 125); the latter borrowed it from Seneca (Seneca, *Epistula morales*, trans. by Gummere, LXX, 2).

[38] As illustrated by the late eleventh-century Cluniac customaries (presented in my article in this volume), the noun *uir* and the formulation *aetas uirilis* can be used for teenagers who have just left childhood; Udalrich of Zell, *Antiquiores consuetudines Cluniacensis Monasterii*, ed. by Migne, col. 748, and Bernard of Cluny, 'Ordo cluniacensis', ed. by Herrgott, p. 210. I found no reference to *maturitas*, *aetas uirilis*, or *aetas roboris* in the Cluniac charters, but this kind of vocabulary is not likely to occur in such sources. Kathleen G. Cushing has discussed examples of the use of *vir* in opposition to *adolescens* or *iuuenis* in writings by Peter Damian and Gregory VII in the second half of the eleventh century, in Cushing, '*Pueri*, *iuvenes*, and *viri*'; however, except for one case (p. 446) where the opposition is clear, I am not convinced that her reading of the adverb *viriliter* as 'not [acting] in a youthful manner' is justified.

if such a phase would have ever existed and even been hoped for within a traditional ecclesiastical setting, and especially a monastic one. In a world where communal bonds were so essential and dependence on God was a given in this life and the next, could an age of full independence be meaningful and attractive? Indeed, most members of the clergy remained all their lives the spiritual sons of someone, if not the abbot, then the bishop, archbishop, or pope. Secondly, consider the middle age between youth and old age as being the 'perfect age', the top of the bell-shaped life cycle. I read its absence to mean that, from the point of view of a group for whom salvation was fundamental, no age was perfect: one moved from young adulthood and its sexual drive and other shortcomings to old adulthood and its loss of strength and hardening of sin. More importantly, no age should be privileged because all ages could be saved.[39] However a more secular point of view, especially a medical one, would define the life curve quite differently.[40]

It is difficult to conclude much from the five non-Christian lists of ages (presented in Table 2) written over one century, both because the sample is too small and because they seem to differ quite significantly between each other. Nevertheless, the characteristics one can observe in this list of five scientific texts are typical of some occasional changes that appeared from the 1120s onwards in Western definitions. It is worth discussing them here, if only cursorily. One should not consider the five definitions from Table 2 as completely alien by the mid-twelfth century: through a process of translation, the translators have adapted them to their own language and therefore, partly, to their own reality. They might also have significantly influenced the perception of the ages in the Medieval West from the twelfth century onwards. Consequently they are undeniably useful in developing an understanding of the evolution of twelfth-century perceptions of the ages and the strengthening of a specific perspective of the life cycle, something that I would like to call the 'secular' approach. One can notice that the separation around fourteen, normally between *pueritia* and *adolescentia*, is not a given anymore, as it was in almost all Western definitions prior to the early twelfth century. At least three definitions in Table 2 include *adolescentia* in the first phase of life.[41] One should also notice that in at

[39] Émilien Lamirande wrote that Saint Ambrose could not have adopted an Aristotelian schema of the ages of man (with middle age representing perfection) given that, in a spiritual perspective, progress should be unceasing: Lamirande, 'Âges de l'homme et âges spirituels', p. 213. There is no doubt that the Aristotelian model of the ages of man (the plant growing and then declining) did not fit well within a religious perspective; however, I believe that most medieval religious authors would have agreed that all ages can aspire to spiritual perfection and none was ideal. See Gnilka, *Aetas spiritualis*, and Cushing, '*Pueri*, *iuvenes*, and *viri*', p. 443.

[40] See Deborah Youngs's article in this volume.

[41] I discuss this issue at greater length in my article in this volume.

least three cases *iuuentus* ended earlier, in the second half of the thirties or early forties, making this stage look more like our contemporary youth. The evanescent middle age can here also be observed. It is called *uirilis aetas* (or even once *senectus*), starts between thirty-five and forty-one, and stops at different times: late forties, late fifties, or around sixty years old.[42] Lastly, in two cases, *senectus* starts younger, at the age of thirty-five/forty. However, both of these age definitions do not have a 'middle age', and it could well be that the Latin translators conceived their *senectus* as a middle age (or an 'old adulthood'), rather than an old age; it would provide another example, from a very different angle, of the occasional positive perception of the term *senectus* for some Latin medieval authors. Whatever the case, one thing is certain: for these five non-Western authors (including the translators?), decrepitude starts much earlier, between two to thirty-five years earlier than the age limit found in Table 1.[43] The English anonymous (*c.* 1120–30) and William of Saint-Thierry (d. 1148) also offered a much lower age limit to enter *senium* than their predecessors. This new trend in the West was apparently not restricted to translators of foreign texts.

To conclude, a focus on the period between the sixth and the very early twelfth century permits us to discern a relatively stable but quite original definition of the life cycle. It consisted of three main phases, *pueritia*, *iuuentus*, and *senectus* (childhood, young adulthood, and old adulthood), which were most often but not systematically subdivided: *pueritia* into *infantia* and *pueritia*, *iuuentus* into *adolescentia* and *iuuentus*, and *senectus* into *senectus* and *senium* or *decrepita aetas*. This division of the life cycle did not disappear after the 1120s. In fact, it probably remained one of the most popular schemes of dividing human life until the end of the Middle Ages. However, by the early twelfth century, it had become only one conception of the life cycle among others. The true turning point can maybe be observed with Pseudo-Bede and Hugh of Saint-Victor. Before them since Late Antiquity, there was no real middle age between *iuuentus* and *senectus*, maybe because the ecclesiastical authors of the early and central Middle Ages were reluctant to assign a summit to a human life. It can also be observed that during these six centuries the last phase had been given an unusual importance, by being almost always divided into two distinct periods, *senectus* and *senium*,

[42] On middle age (or adulthood) in the later Middle Ages, see the articles by Deborah Youngs and Sue Niebrzydowski in this volume.

[43] Ptolemy starts his last age at sixty-eight, which is two years younger than the usual seventy, but the first translation of Ali ibn al-Abbas gives forty-five as the lower age limit of the last age, which is thirty-five years younger than eighty years old, the highest age limit to enter *decrepita aetas* occasionally found in Table 1.

limiting decrepitude to a very late last stage in life, at the age of seventy or even eighty: a quite understandable conception of old age for individuals whose life did not depend upon harsh bodily activities.

Authors in the Medieval West prior to the Thirteenth Century (Table 1)

Tertullian (d. *c.* 230)

In a passage of *De anima* (210/13), Tertullian discusses the age of the soul when it reintegrates the body, especially in the cases of infant deaths:

infantia | *pueritia* | *adolescentia* | *iuuenta* | *senecta*[44]

Ambrose of Milan (d. 397)

Ambrose's definitions of the ages have been studied in their totality, and I have chosen to present here the conclusions reached by Émilien Lamirande in his two articles on the topic. Ambrose's last and maybe main division, useful to discuss the spiritual ages of man, is a tripartite one:

pueritia | *iuuentus* | *senectus*
pueri | *iuuenes* = *ephebi* = *adulescentes* = *iuniores* | *senes* = *uiri* = *seniores*[45]

However, the four-age division was also important in his writings. One can find it for instance in *De Abraham*. In this context, Ambrose calls the last age *maturitas* and at other times *senectus*:

pueritia | *adulescentia* | *iuuentus* | *maturitas or senectus*[46]

[44] Tertullian, *De anima*, ed. by Waszink, c. 56, p. 864. This definition, with its endings in *a*, is a replica of Varro's (116–27 BCE) as repeated by Servius (fourth century). See Néraudau, *La Jeunesse dans la littérature*, p. 93. On the terms *iuuenta* and *senecta*, see Slusanski, 'Le Vocabulaire latin des *gradus aetatum*', p. 445 and pp. 567–69.

[45] Lamirande, 'Les Âges de l'homme', and Lamirande, 'Âges de l'homme et âges spirituels', pp. 213–14. To justify his third division, Lamirande explains (p. 217): 'Malgré les nombreux termes dont il [Ambroise] se sert pour désigner la troisième catégorie des athlètes du Christ, c'est le mot *senes* qui revient le plus souvent ou qui, en tout cas, apparaît le plus chargé de sens. *Vir* et *senex* sont deux termes dont l'acceptation se recouvre, en conformité avec les perspectives de l'Écriture qui voit dans le *vir perfectus* celui qui a achevé sa course.'

[46] Ambrose, *Opera*, ed. by Schenkl, pars I, 620; Ambrose, *De Abraham*, ed. by Schenkl, IX. 65, p. 220.

Prudentius (d. *c.* 410)

Prudentius wrote his *Contra Symmachum* (384/402–03) to combat the accusation that Christianity was the product of a senile Rome. In it, he demonstrates that the successive ages of history (like the ones of man) gave humanity an opportunity to improve:

infantia | *pueritia* | *iuuenta* | *roboris aetas* | *senectus*[47]

In his *Psychomachia*, he imagines all ages coming to the altar to sacrifice to the Lord in the Temple, once virtues triumph over vices:

pueri | *ephebi* | *uiri* | *decrepita senecta*[48]

Prudentius spent his career as a layman, even though he finished his life as an ascetic. It is noticeable that, in his two definitions, one finds a 'middle age' and only one old age.

Jerome (d. 419/20)

In his *Epistle to Heliodorus* (*Ad Heliodorum epitaphium Nepotiani*, 396), Jerome evokes the inability of man to comprehend the passing of time:

infans | *puer* | *iuuenis* | *robustae aetatis* | *senex*[49]

In his analysis of the parable of the vineyard (Matthew 20. 1–6), part of his commentary on Matthew's Gospel (398), he associates the five hours of the day (when the master hires new workers to work in his vineyard) to the five ages of man when one can turn towards God, a recurrent interpretation of the parable:

ex utero matris (Psalm 21. 11) | *a pubertate* | *matura aetate* |
iam declinante ad senium | *ultima senectute*[50]

[47] Prudentius, *Contra Symmachum*, ed. by Cunningham, lb. II, vv. 318–23, p. 222. On the dates of the poem, more probably 402/03, see Barnes, 'The Historical Setting of Prudentius's *Contra Symmachum*'.

[48] Prudentius, *Psychomachia*, ed. by Cunningham, vv. 845–48, p. 179.

[49] Jerome, *Lettres*, ed. and trans. by Labourt, III, letter 60 (*Ad Heliodorum epitaphium Nepotiani*), p. 109; Scourfield, *Consoling Heliodorus*, pp. 72–73 n. 19. I discovered too late to incorporate its results in here the thorough study on Jerome's definitions of the ages by Hamblenne, 'La Longévité de Jérôme'. As this article shows, Jerome did not always have a middle age (unlike the two definitions I offer); his *pueritia* could last as long as twenty years, and his frontier between *pueritia* and *adolescentia* (and *iuuentus*) was quite porous.

[50] Jerome, *Commentariorum in Matheum libri IV*, ed. by Hurst and Adriaen, pp. 174–75;

Augustine of Hippo (d. 430)

Augustine's *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* (*c.* 388–90), *De uera religione* (*c.* 390), and his sermon to the inhabitants of Hippo in 426 to present his successor, all give similar definitions of the ages, except that in *De Genesi* the stage following *iuuentus* is called *senioris aetas* while the two other texts call it *grauitas*. Moreover, the last work calls the last age *deterior aetas ac decolor et morbis subiector debilisque* instead of the more prosaic *senectus*:

infantia | *pueritia* | *adolescentia* | *iuuentus* | *senioris aetas or grauitas* | *senectus or deterior aetas*[51]

A similar list is given in two passages of *De diuersis quaestionibus octaginta tribus* with *grauitas* following *iuuentus*, except for the fact that the age limit of sixty is assigned to the beginning of the last stage:

infantia | *pueritia* | *adolescentia* | *iuuentus* | *grauitas* | *(60–120) senectus*[52]

From sixty, it lasts sixty years, as many years as the previous stages all combined, and this corresponds to the last age of the world, when the Lord comes to take man away (Genesis 6. 3). One might then infer that Augustine's *grauitas*, also called by him *senioris aetas* (as seen above), might have started earlier than forty-nine, as will become the norm. However, I doubt that it would have started earlier than forty-five, the usual frontier when one became a *senior* in Antiquity, before becoming a *senex* around sixty.[53]

In the *Enchiridion* (*c.* 421), he gives a complete list of the age groups to describe the whole of humanity:

Jerome, *Commentaire sur saint Matthieu*, ed. and trans. by Bonnard, bk III, c. 20, p. 86. On the filiations of this interpretation of the parable, see Tevel, 'The Labourers in the Vineyard', Sears, *The Ages of Man*, pp. 80–88, and Bagliani, 'Âges de la vie', p. 12.

[51] Augustine, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, ed. by Wagner, lb. I, c. 23, pp. 104–12. Augustine, *De vera religione*, ed. by Daur, c. 26, pp. 217–18. Augustine, '*Epistula* CCXIII', ed. by Goldbacher, p. 373.

[52] Augustine, *De diuersis quaestionibus octaginta tribus*, ed. by Mutzenbecher, c. 58, pp. 106–07, and c. 64, pp. 137–38. On Augustine's interpretations of the links between the ages of the world and the human ages, see Luneau, *L'Histoire du salut chez les Pères de l'Église*, pp. 284–407, besides the studies already mentioned by P. Archambault, E. Sears, and J. A. Burrow. For a synthesis on the history of this theme through the Middle Ages, see Lobrichon, 'Un Moyen Âge, sept âges du monde'.

[53] Slusanski, 'Le Vocabulaire latin des *gradus aetatum*', p. 564.

infantes | *pueri* | *adulescentes* | *iuuenes* | *seniores* | *senes*[54]

In two analyses of the parable of the vineyard (Matthew 20. 1–16), Augustine gives slightly different definitions:

pueri | *adolescentuli* | *iuuenes* | *grauiores* | *decrepiti*[55]
recentes ab utero matris | *pueri* | *iuuenes* | *uergentes in senium* | *omnino decrepiti*[56]

While all the above definitions mention two stages after *iuuentus*, Augustine gives at least one version with only one stage, namely in his commentary of Psalm 127:

infantia | *pueritia* | *adulescentia* | *iuuentus* | *senectus*[57]

The fluidity and complexity of naming of the last stages of the life cycle during Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages is well illustrated by Augustine. He fluctuates between various terms for the ages following *iuuentus*, and for the individuals in these age groups. However, given his use of the term *grauitas*, he obviously associates moral values to this age, rather than physical strength. In other words, it is quite probably distinct from Prudentius's *roboris aetas* or Jerome's *robusta aetas*. Regarding the first phases, Augustine is much more consistent, except that he once ignores *infantia*, probably having considered it this time a part of *pueritia*, and once forgets *adolescentia*, probably having incorporated it this time into *iuuentus*.

Caesarius of Arles (d. 542)

In his sermon 160, Caesarius explains the symbolism of the six jars of water transformed into wine at the marriage in Cana linking them with the ages of man:

infantia | *pueritia* | *adulescentia* | *iuuentus* | *senectus* | *decrepita aetas*[58]

[54] Augustine, *Enchiridion ad Laurentium de fide*, ed. by Evans, XXVII. 103, p. 105. On the use of *seniores* to indicate the individuals pertaining to the age following *iuuentus*, see note 21 above.

[55] Augustine, *Sermo habitus ad mensam sancti Cypriani die dominica*, ed. by Lambot, p. 614. The date Augustine preached this text is uncertain, maybe in Carthage in 418; see Verbraken, *Études critiques sur les sermons authentiques de saint Augustin*, p. 64.

[56] Augustine, *Sermo LXXXVII*, ed. by Migne, chap. 5, no. 7, col. 533. The date this sermon was preached is also unknown (Verbraken, *Études critiques sur les sermons authentiques de saint Augustin*, p. 74).

[57] Augustine, 'In Psalmum CXXVII', ed. by Gori, 15, p. 226; Augustine, *Enarrationes in psalmos CI–CL*, ed. by Dekkers and Fraipont, p. 1878.

[58] Caesarius of Arles, '*Sermo* 169', ed. by Morin, pp. 692–93.

Gregory the Great (d. 604)

In *Homilia XIX*, Gregory provides his own reading of the parable of the vineyard (Matthew 20. 1–16), likewise associating the hours of the parable to the ages of human life:

pueritia | *adolescentia* | *iuuentus* | *senectus* | *aetas quae decrepita uel ueterana dicitur*[59]

In another homily, Gregory explains the parable of the three vigils in the night (Luke 12. 35–40), associating them with the three ages of life when Christ can come:

pueritia | *adulescentia uel iuuentus* | *senectus*[60]

His *Moralia in Iob* gives another definition of the life cycle in five ages. He has divided *pueritia* into two, adding *infantia*, and did the reverse for the last two ages, condensing them into *senectus*:

infantia | *pueritia* | *adolescentia* | *iuuentus* | *senectus*[61]

Gregory's playing around with the ages exemplifies well the fact that the usual six ages can be regrouped into three main ones: *pueritia*, *adolescentia uel iuuentus*, and finally *senectus*.

Isidore of Seville (d. 636)

Isidore's definitions were probably the most influential. However, he gave multiple and varied definitions. For instance, one finds only one age for childhood in his interpretation of the parable of the vineyard (Matthew 20. 1–16):

a rudimentis infantiae | *in adolescentia* | *in iuuentutis aetate* |
iam a iuuentute in senectutem declinantes | *decrepiti*[62]

[59] Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Evangelia*, ed. by Etaix, *Homilia* XIX, pp. 144–45. This definition and its adjoining explanations have been copied verbatim by Smaragdus and Hrabanus Maurus, and with only slight transformations by Haymo of Auxerre. Smaragdus, *Collectiones in Epistolas et Evangelia*, ed. by Migne, col. 103; Hrabanus Maurus, *Commentarius in Matthaeum*, ed. by Löfstedt, lb. VI, p. 525; Haymo of Auxerre, *Homiliae de tempore*, ed. by Migne, cols 157A–B.

[60] Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Evangelia*, ed. by Etaix, *Homilia* XIII, p. 92.

[61] Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*, ed. by Adriaen, lb. XI, c. 46 (62), p. 621.

[62] Isidore of Seville, *Allegoriae*, ed. by Migne, 178–82, cols 121–22 (with slight corrections provided by Dominique Poirel who is preparing a new edition of this text).

In the *Etymologiae*, when he defines the ages, he mentions among others the human ages and adds: 'sicut infantia, iuuentus, senectus'.[63] Yet, since it is uncertain whether he considered this list as complete or selective and exemplary, I have not added it to Table 1.[64] In Book XI, concerning human beings, he gives a longer list, which includes the age limits between each stage. These numbers will appear frequently in later medieval definitions of the ages:

infantia | *(7) pueritia* | *(14) adolescentia* | *(28) iuuentus* | *(50) grauitas* | *(70) senectus*[65]

He adds that the extreme end of the last age is called *senium*. This being said, one should note the differences concerning the ages following *iuuentus* in another list given in his *Differentiae*:

infantia | *(7) pueritia* | *(14) adolescentia* | *(28) iuuentus* | *(49) senectus* | *(77) senium*[66]

Once again, the phase following *iuuentus* can be designated by various names. However, it has become almost a given by the early Middle Ages that this phase consists of at least two ages.

Eugenius of Toledo (d. 657)

In a short poem following a translation by first hand, he lists the six ages of human life:

infantia | *pueritia* | *a. adulta* | *iuuenta* | *senecta* | *senium*[67]

[63] Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum*, ed. by Lindsay, v. 38. 5.

[64] According to E. Sears the list was incomplete (Sears, *The Ages of Man*, p. 60), but I am not so sure.

[65] Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum*, ed. by Lindsay, XI. 2. 1–8. For simplicity sake, here and elsewhere, I have only indicated the lower limit of each age of the human life, as the upper limit is automatically the lower one of the next age, except for the last one ending up with death.

[66] Isidore of Seville, *Liber differentiarum*, ed. by Andrés Sanz, lb. II, c. 18, pp. 49–51. On the divergences between these last two definitions, see de Ghellinck, '*Iuventus*, *gravitas*, *senectus*', pp. 44–45 and Hofmeister, '*Puer*, *iuuenis*, *senex*', pp. 289–91. A similar definition, without the chronological ages, is to be found in *Liber Numerorum*, usually attributed to Isidore (Isidore of Seville, *Liber numerorum*, ed. by Migne, col. 185).

[67] Eugenius of Toledo, *Monosticha recapitulationis septem dierum*, ed. by Vollmer, p. 69. See also Dracontius, *Louanges de Dieu*, ed. by Moussy and Camus, pp. 106–10. On the term *adulta* (or *adultus*), not often used in the Middle Ages, and not to be translated by 'adult' in classical Latin, see Slusanski, 'Le Vocabulaire latin des *gradus aetatum*', p. 369.

Bede the Venerable (d. 735)

In his *De temporibus* (*c*. 703) and his *De temporum ratione* (725), Bede returns to the Augustinian theme of the relationship of the ages of the world to human ages. He gives similar lists in both cases:

infantia | *pueritia* | *adolescentia* | *iuuenilis [aetas]* | *grauis senectus* | *decrepita aetas*[68]

However, in another chapter of the latter text, he discusses the link between the four ages and four humours. His list is then quite dissimilar:

infantes | *adolescentes* | *transgressores* | *senes*[69]

This division of the ages is the most unusual of the definitions from the sixth to the eleventh century. There is no doubt that Bede's *infantes* are also *pueri*, given that he describes them as 'cheerful, happy, forgiving, laughing and talking a lot' ('hilares, laetos, misericordes, multum ridentes et loquentes'). Even though children before the age of seven talk, this aptitude is usually associated with *pueritia*, not *infantia*. Therefore, one can safely assume that his *infantes* are between the ages of zero and (approximately) fourteen. The definition he gives of *transgressores* seems not to refer to *iuuentus*, but more probably to the stage starting at forty-nine, or not much earlier. He writes that the transgressors are 'steadfast, grave, of sound mores, and cunning' ('stabiles, graues, compositos moribus, dolososque').[70] The adjective *grauis* is especially telling in this respect, but so is the reference to their moral behaviour.

Alcuin (d. 804)

In his *Commentaria in S. Joannis euangelium*, Alcuin borrows the Augustinian theme of the six ages of the world being linked to the six ages of man. He gives the following list for the latter:

infantia | *pueritia* | *adolescentia* | *juuentus* | *grauitas* | *senectus*[71]

[68] Bede, *De temporibus*, ed. by Jones, pp. 600–01. Bede, *De temporum ratione*, ed. by Jones, pp. 463–64.

[69] Bede, *De temporum ratione*, ed. by Jones, pp. 392–93.

[70] Bede, *De temporum ratione*, ed. by Jones, pp. 392–93. However, see Byrhtferth's definitions below.

[71] Alcuin, *Commentaria in S. Joannis Evangelium*, ed. by Migne, lb. II, c. 7, col. 792.

Hrabanus Maurus (d. 856)

In his *De universo sive de rerum naturis* (846), Hrabanus offers two definitions of the human life cycle. The first is inspired by Isidore's *Etymologiae*:

infantia | *(7) pueritia* | *(14) adolescentia* | *(28) iuuentus* |
(50) 'aetas senioris, id est, grauitas' | *(70) senectus*[72]

The second is influenced by Bede's interpretation of the Augustinian comparison between the ages of the world and the human life cycle:

infantia | *pueritia* | *adolescentia* | *iuuenilis aetas* |
quasi senilis aetas | *aetas decrepita*[73]

Hildemar (d. *c.* 850)

In his commentary on the rule of Saint Benedict for his young pupils, Hildemar gives a list of the ages:

infantia | *(7) pueritia* | *(14) adolescentia* | *(28) juventus* |
(56) senectus | *(70) decrepita aetas*[74]

A Manuscript from the Abbey of Fulda (Ninth Century)

A passage contains a verse reading of the definition of the ages as given by Isidore in his *Etymologiae*:

infantia | *(7–8) pueritia* | *(14) a. adulescentis* | *(28) iuuentus* |
(50) aetas senioris | *(70) senectus*[75]

Infantia lasts until seven in the poem itself, but eight is given as its upper age limit in the margins.

[72] Hrabanus Maurus, *De universo*, ed. by Migne, lb. VII, c. 1, cols 179 and 185.

[73] Hrabanus Maurus, *De universo*, ed. by Migne, lb. X, c. 14, cols 306–07.

[74] Hildemar, *Expositio regulae*, ed. by Mittermüller, XXXVII, p. 420.

[75] München, BSB, MS Clm 14641, fol. 32^{r} as transcribed by Sears, *The Ages of Man*, p. 65 and p. 178 n. 46.

Remigius of Auxerre (d. 908)

In his *Commentum in Martianum Capellam*, Remigius discusses the four cardinal points, the four elements, the four virtues, the four vices, and the four ages:

infantia | *pueritia* | *adolescentia* | *iuuentus*[76]

In order to obtain the number four, the ages past *iuuentus* have been ignored. Remigius justifies himself saying that past this stage an individual does not evolve anymore in either size or intelligence ('nec ingenio nec statura corporis'). However he admits that: 'some claim that the fourth age is *senectus*' ('quidam quartam aetatem dicunt senectutem esse').

Indeed, in another definition of the ages, this time in his *glosse* of Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, he abandons *infantia* and adds *senectus*:

pueritia | *adolescentia* | *iuuentus* | *senectus*[77]

Obviously, *infantia* has been absorbed here by *pueritia*.

Manuscript from Chartres (Tenth Century)

This medical manuscript contains various texts by Soranus, Galen, Pseudo-Soranus, and Pseudo-Galen.[78] According to E. Sears, a list of the ages of life has been added on folio 37^{r}. Given that it does not have an attribution, one can reasonably infer that the copyist gave his own list or made this one his own: '*infantia* has seven years, *pueritia* seven, *adolescentia* seven, *iuuentus* three times seven, *senectus* four times seven' ('Infantia habet *VII* annos, puericia *VII*, adolescentia *VII*, iuventus ter *VII*, senectus quater *VII*'):

infantia | *(7) pueritia* | *(14) adulescentia* | *(21) iuuentus* | *(from 42 to 70) senectus*

The very early age of entrance into *iuuentus* can be explained in two different ways. The author might have been influenced by the scientific approach of the texts he was copying. A more probable explanation might be that he forgot a 'bis' while giving the length of *adulescentia*. Indeed, in other texts defining the ages by

[76] Remigius of Auxerre, *Commentum in Martianum Capellam*, ed. by Lutz, II, lb. VII, 369. 21, p. 187.

[77] BAV, MS Pal. lat. 1581, fol. 35^{r}, as photographed in Sears, *The Ages of Man*, planche no. 2.

[78] Chartres, Bibl. municipale, MS 62, as described by Sears, *The Ages of Man*, pp. 27 and 47. See also Wickersheimer, *Les Manuscrits latins de médecine*, MS X, pp. 17–21.

hebdomads, there are always two hebdomads associated to *adulescentia*.[79] If such was the case, *iuuentus* would then start at its usual twenty-eight and *senectus* at its usual forty-nine.

Manuscript from Paris (Tenth Century)

This manuscript is also a collection of medical texts. First, the limit of each age of man is given (7, 14, 27, 48 or 49, and 70 or 80). Then the length of each age is specified in hebdomads: one for *infantia*, one for *pueritia*, two for *adulescentia*, three for *iuuentus*, and four for *senectus*. This last number means that *senium* would start at seventy-seven instead of seventy or eighty:

infantia | *(7) pueritia* | *(14) adulescentia* | *(27/28) iuuentus* | *(48/49) senectus* | *(70/77/80) senium or decrepitus or nimium senex*[80]

Byrhtferth (d. *c.* 1020)

In his *Enchiridion* (1010–12), a commentary on the *computus* that he had composed earlier, the learned monk of Ramsey mentioned in Old English and Latin the four ages in relation with the four seasons, the four humours, the twelve winds, etc.:

pueritia | *adolescentia* | *iuuentus* | *senectus*[81]

His approach is entirely scientific, and he does not make reference to religion in this passage. His old English equivalent to *iuuentus* is *geþungen yld*. Both terms have been translated by the two most recent editors and translators as 'manhood', which seems appropriate for *geþungen yld*, but less obvious for *iuuentus*. I would suggest that *geþungen yld* does not refer to the moral or spiritual evolution of

[79] See for instance Isidore of Seville, *Liber differentiarum*, ed. by Andrés Sanz, lb. II, c. 18, p. 49, and *infra* the definitions from the Paris manuscript and from Papias's *Vocabularium latinum*.

[80] BnF, MS lat. 2825, fol. 80^{r} as described by Sears, *The Ages of Man*, p. 47. See also Wickersheimer, *Les Manuscrits latins de médecine*, MS XLVIII, pp. 56–57. In Table 1, I only wrote *senium* to save space, but the manuscript says 'senium idem decrepitus et nimium senex dicitur'.

[81] Byrhtferth, *Enchiridion*, ed. by Baker and Lapidge, I. 1. 102–33, pp. 10–12 and IV. 1. 73–84, p. 202. On Byrhtferth's discussion of old age, see Philippa Semper's article in this volume.

the individual, but rather to his physical maturity.[82] However the complexity of Byrhtferth's definition of *iuuentus* is well illustrated by the fact that he also uses the term *transgressores* to identify the ones in *iuuentus*.[83]

He also divided his *Vita Egwini* according to the ages of life and one finds again the same Latin divisions.[84]

Apocryphal Letter Said to be from Luke, Manuscript from Chiemsee (Eleventh Century)

Luke the Evangelist, who was believed to be a doctor, would have addressed himself to Christian doctors in this letter:

infantia | (7) pueritia | (14) adulescentia | (28) iuuentus | (48) senectus | (56) media senectus | (70) senium[85]

We can observe here one of the rare (but telling) cases in which the last phase is being divided into three, rather than two, ages.

Papias Grammaticus (Mid-Eleventh Century)

In the article 'aetas' of his *Elementarium* (1041–63), this grammarian gives a list of the ages of man, which is quite straightforward regarding their limits, but is slightly unusual regarding the vocabulary:

infantia | (7) pueritia | (14) adolescentia | (28) iuventus uel uirilitas | (48) senior | (70) senectus or senium[86]

This is the only example I know, in the medieval definitions of the ages of man, of *senior* used as a noun to identify an age; however, the term had been used in the past, for instance by Augustine, to name an individual in this same age group,

[82] I consulted Joan Holland, in the *Dictionary of Old English* (University of Toronto), who agreed that the moral or the intellectual development was not the intended sense (personal communication).

[83] Byrhtferth, *Enchiridion*, ed. by Baker and Lapidge, p. 12 and Sears, *The Ages of Man*, p. 23.

[84] Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth and the *Vita* S. Ecgwini', p. 338.

[85] München, BSB, MS Clm 5257, fols 26$^{r–v}$ and 28^{r} as described by de Ghellinck, '*Iuventus*, *gravitas*, *senectus*', pp. 47–48 and Sears, *The Ages of Man*, p. 172 n. 41. The first author refers us to Böll, 'Die Lebensalter', pp. 108 and 108 n. 3, but only the late entrance into *senectus* is discussed in this work. Sears refers to Höhn, *Die Einteilungsarten der Lebens*, pp. 13–14 and p. 49.

[86] Papias, *Elementarium*, ed. by de Angelis, p. 110. On the dates for Papias, see lastly Cervanti, 'Introduzione', pp. iii–iv.

between the late forties and the late sixties. Far more intriguing in my mind is this first appearance of the term *uirilitas* which will become much more usual in the twelfth century, but more often than not used as a distinct age from *iuuentus*.

Papias then discusses spiritual ages and the ages of the world. Before giving the latter, he repeats the ages of man, but offers this time a somewhat different list:

infantia | *pueritia* | *adolescentia* | *iuventus* | *senectus*[87]

The differences between the two lists offer a typical example of the flexibility of the term *senectus*.

Honorius Augustodunensis (d. *c.* 1140)

In his encyclopaedic work *De imagine mundi* (*c.* 1110), Honorius offered the following definition of the life cycle:

infantia | *(7) pueritia* | *(14) adolescentia* | *(21) juventus* | *(50) senectus* | *(70) decrepita [a.] (until a hundred years old or until death)*[88]

His lower age limit for *iuuentus* should be noticed. Yet he also used four nouns to describe individuals in the four age groups, in order to discuss the impact of the four humours:

infantes | *juvenes* | *provectiores* | *senes*[89]

In this definition, he has adopted Bede's scientific approach from Chapter 35 of his *De temporum ratione*, with the exception that he transformed Bede's *adolescentes* and *transgressores*, into *iuuenes* and *prouectiores*.

In his *Sacramentarium*, Honorius espouses a more spiritual perspective, and his four ages are this time slightly different but probably equivalent:

pueritia | *iuventus* | *senectus* | *aetas decrepita*[90]

[87] Papias, *Elementarium*, ed. by de Angelis, p. 111.

[88] Honorius Augustodunensis, *De imagine mundi*, ed. by Migne, lb. II, c. 75, col. 156. The last version of the *De imagine mundi*, dating from 1139, gives the same age divisions; see Flint, 'Honorius Augustodunensis: *Imago Mundi*', p. 110. On Honorius's peculiar definition with his younger *iuuentus*, his use of the adjective *decrepita*, and the limit of a hundred years, see Hofmeister, '*Puer*, *iuuenis*, *senex*', p. 293.

[89] Honorius Augustodunensis, *De imagine mundi*, ed. by Migne, lb. II, c. 59, col. 154 and Flint, 'Honorius Augustodunensis: *Imago Mundi*', p. 106.

[90] Honorius Augustodunensis, *Sacramentarium*, ed. by Migne, c. 50, col. 773. M. Goodich

In *Gemma animae*, Honorius established a parallel between the six canonical hours and the ages of a member of the clergy:

infantia | *pueritia* | *adolescentia* | *iuuentus* | *senectus* | *decrepitas*

While one begins the process of being ordained and enters the ecclesiastical hierarchy during *adolescentia*, one becomes a deacon and priest during *iuuentus*, (hopefully) leads others during *senectus*, and finally prepares to die in the last stage.[91] Interestingly enough, in this spiritual perspective, there is no reference to senility.

In both the *Sacramentarium* and the *Gemma Animae*, he also associates the three vigils at night (Luke 12. 35–40) with the three ages of man, as Gregory the Great had done before him:

pueritia | *iuuentus* | *senectus*[92]

Honorius's definitions offer a perfect example of the three main phases, *pueritia*, *iuuentus*, and *senectus*, summarizing the ages of man. However, these phases are often subdivided into four or six ages, depending on the context, with all these related definitions still participating essentially in the same perception of the human life cycle.

Lambert de Saint-Omer (d. *c.* 1125)

In his encyclopaedia, the *Liber Floridus* (*c.* 1115–20), this canon of Saint-Omer mentions the human life cycle in at least two passages, discussing its association with the seasons and the ages of the world:

infantia | *(7) pueritia* | *(14) adolescentia* | *(28) iuuentus* |
(50) grauitas | *(70) senectus* | *(80) decrepita [a.]*

and

infantia | *pueritia* | *adolescentia* | *iuuentus* | *senectus* | *decrepita [a.]*[93]

attributes this text to Guillaume de Conches, without giving any explanation (Goodich, *From Birth to Old Age* , p. 65). However it is definitely attributed to Honorius by Garrigues, 'L'Œuvre d'Honorius Augustodunensis.

[91] Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae*, ed. by Migne, lb. II, c. 54, col. 633.

[92] Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma animae*, ed. by Migne, lb. II, c. 50, col. 629B, and Honorius Augustodunensis, *Sacramentarium*, ed. by Migne, c. 48, cols 772–73.

[93] Lambert de Saint-Omer, *Liber Floridus*, ed. by Derolez, fols 20^{v} and 23^{v}. The first definition is given on both these folios, while the second one is given only once, also on folio 23^{v}. More recently on this encyclopaedia, see Derolez, *The Autograph Manuscript of the Liber*

The only difference between these two definitions, one of seven ages and the other of six, is that, in the second one, *grauitas* and *senectus* have been regrouped into one age, *senectus*.

Marbod, Bishop of Rennes (d. 1123)

The fifth chapter of Marbod's *Liber decem capitulorum* concerns *senectus*. When pointing out the fact that each age has its downside, he mentions, besides the *senex*, the *infans*, the *puer*, and the *iuuenes*, which gives the following list:

infans | *puer* | *iuuenis* | *senex*[94]

Bruno of Segni (d. 1123)

In his *Expositio in Apocalypsim*, the Bishop of Segni lists four ages in relation with Apocalypse 21. 12–13. His list is quite typical, except for the fact that he calls the first phase *primaeva aetas*:

primaeva aetas | *adolescentia* | *iuuentus* | *senectus*[95]

Rupert of Deutz (d. 1129)

Following in the footsteps of Bruno of Segni, Rupert compares the four doors of the Messianic Jerusalem (Apocalypse 21. 12–13) with the four ages of man in his *Commentaria in Apocalypsim* (*c*. 1118–21):

pueritia | *adulescentia* | *iuuentus* | *senectus*[96]

Floridus. Derolez gives no date of composition in his 1998 study. I found two different dates in a recent collection of articles on the Hereford Map: *c*. 1115 according to Gautier-Dalché, 'Maps in Words', p. 228, and *c*. 1120 according to Kupfer, 'Mappaemundi', p. 255. The autograph manuscript was finished in 1120 (Derolez, 'Introduction', in Lambert de Saint-Omer, *Liber Floridus*, ed. by Derolez, p. vii).

[94] Marbod de Rennes, *Liber decem capitulorum*, ed. by Leotta, p. 47.

[95] Bruno of Segni, *Expositio in Apocalypsim*, ed. by Migne, lb. VII, c. 21, col. 722.

[96] Rupert of Deutz, *Commentaria in Apocalypsim*, ed. by Migne, lb. XII, c. 21, col. 1197. For the dates, see Van Engen, *Rupert of Deutz*, and Arduini, *Rupert von Deutz*.

Guillaume de Conches (d. *c.* 1155)

In his *De philosophia mundi* (written between 1125 and 1130), Guillaume discusses aptitude for learning in relation with the four ages of man:

prima aetas | *iuventus* | *senectus* | *senium*[97]

Given that he considers the first age to be unsuited for learning (as well as the last one which he associates with senility), it seems that he does not include *adolescentia* in this *prima aetas*. He holds a similar discourse on the ages of life at the end of his *Dragmaticon* (*c.* 1144–49, especially 1147–49).[98]

English Anonymous, *Tractatus de Quaternario* (*c.* 1120–30)

In Book III of the *Tractatus de Quaternario*, a work by an anonymous author from the beginning of the twelfth century, several distinct definitions of the ages of man are given.[99] Even though the author did not himself make these definitions, he did not anchor them in the past. He considered them most probably to be contemporary. Therefore, I chose to list them all.

According to him, philosophers divide the life cycle in seven in relation to the seven planets around the earth:

infantia | *pueritia* | *adulescentia* | *iuuentus* | *senectus* | *senium* | *decrepitas*

E. Sears wonders about the source for this correlation between the ages of life and the planets. It was common in the East, but theoretically not made in the West before the translations of Ptolemy, which post-date the *Tractatus*.[100]

[97] Guillaume de Conches, *Philosophia*, ed. by Maurach, IV. 54, pp. 113–14 (Guillaume de Conches, *Philosophia*, ed. by Migne, col. 99).

[98] Guillaume de Conches, *Dragmaticon philosophiae*, ed. by Ronca, pp. 269–70. On the datation of Guillaume's works, see pp. xviii–xxi and Ronca and Curr's introduction to Guillaume de Conches, *A Dialogue on Natural Philosophy*, ed. by Ronca and Curr, pp. xxvi–xxvii.

[99] English anonymous, *Tractatus de Quaternario*, in Cambridge, Gonville and Caius Coll., MS 428, fols 29^{r}–32^{v}, as described by Sears, *The Ages of Man*, pp. 23–25 and p. 52. Barbara Obrist offers the date *c.* 1120–30 in 'Wind Diagrams and Medieval Cosmology', n. 153 for this text. Her sole reference is to an article by Lecoq, 'La "Mappemonde" du *De arca Noe mystica*', fig. 6, p. 25 who gives a much earlier date: *c.* 1100. It proves that the frontier of 1120 that I use in this article is purely symbolic.

[100] Sears, *The Ages of Man*, p. 52.

The first division by four is quite unusual according to Western definitions but, as Sears points out, almost identical to the definition made by the Nestorian Iohannicius Hunain ibn Ishaq in his *Isagoge*, recently translated into Latin:

adulescentia | *(25/30) iuuentus* | *(45/50) senectus* | *(55/60) senium*[101]

Supposing that our author used Iohannicius, it is then important to note that he moved the entrance into old adulthood (or old age) forward by ten years, from thirty-five/forty to forty-five/fifty. However, he seemed hesitant to adopt the above definition, using expressions such as 'according to the opinion of some' ('secundum quorumdam opinionem'). Another definition by four suited him much better as he introduced it saying 'Indeed, I believe and it seems to me to be close to the truth that [...]' ('Reor enim et veritati assistere mihi videtur [...]'):

adolescentia or pueritia | *(14) iuuentus* | *(45/50) senectus* | *(60/65) senium*[102]

However, still uncertain, the same author goes on to present a final, quite traditional definition:

pueritia | *adulescentia* | *iuuentus* | *senectus*[103]

Pseudo-Bede (Beginning of the Twelfth Century, after 1125)

In his detailed description of the universe, *De mundi celestis terrestrisque constitutione*, Pseudo-Bede mentions the usual association of the four humours with the four seasons, the four elements, and the four ages. The latter are given as the following:

pueritia | *adulescentia* | *maturitas* | *senectus*[104]

This definition recalls Jerome's. For the first time since Late Antiquity, one finds a middle age that is clearly distinct from youth or old age. Can this 'innovation' be related to Pseudo-Bede's avant-guardist rationalism that had so struck Pierre Duhem?[105]

[101] Sears, *The Ages of Man*, p. 163 n. 69.

[102] Sears, *The Ages of Man*, p. 163 n. 70. The anonymous author wrote about the first age that it was called *adolescentia* or *pueritia*: '[...] prima etas sive adolescentia sive pueritia nominetur [...]'.

[103] Sears, *The Ages of Man*, p. 163 n. 70.

[104] Pseudo-Bede, *De mundi celestis terrestrisque constitutione*, ed. and trans. by Burnett, I. 8–11, p. 18. On the date, see now Caiazzo, *Lectures médiévales de Macrobe*, pp. 148–52.

[105] '[L]es interprétations symboliques et allégoriques ont été complètement chassées; les citations de l'Écriture et des Pères ont entièrement disparu. Il semble que cet auteur ait conçu l'idée, si familière à partir du XIII[e] siècle, d'une science naturelle exclusivement fondée sur les données de

Hugh of Saint-Victor (d. 1141)

In one of his miscellaneous writings elucidating biblical passages, Hugh of Saint-Victor interprets the six jars of water of the marriage at Cana (John 2. 1–10) as Caesarius had done before him, linking them with the ages of man:

infantia | *pueritia* | *adulescentia* | *iuuentus* | *uirilis aetas* | *senectus*[106]

However, to my knowledge, for the first time in such a list, *uirilis aetas* is introduced.

Hugh refers again to *uirilis aetas* in his description of the *mappamundi*, following his analysis of Noah's ark (1125–35), while he has compressed the first four ages into two, ignoring *infantia* and *adolescentia*:

puer | *iuuenis* | *in uirili etate* | *senex*[107]

However, his *De uanitate mundi* evokes a far more traditional list of four ages:

pueri | *adolescentes* | *iuuenes* | *senes*[108]

Peter Abelard (d. 1142)

In his *Expositio in Hexaemeron*, Abelard adopts the Augustinian metaphor concerning the ages of man, but offers a quite personal interpretation of the spiritual significance of each age:

la raison et pleinement indépendante de la Révélation': Duhem, *Le Système du monde*, p. 79.

[106] Hugh of Saint-Victor, *Miscellanea*, ed. by Migne, lb. I, tit. LXXXII, cols 517–18. A similar reading of the parable is to be found in Hugh of Saint-Victor, *Allegoriae in Nouum Testamentum*, ed. by Migne, cols 753–54. E. Sears discusses the other authors who commented on this parable in Sears, *The Ages of Man*, pp. 69–74.

[107] Hugh of Saint-Victor, *Libellus de formation archae*, ed. by Sicard, p. 158. Almost certainly, a similar list is intended in Hugh of Saint-Victor, *De tribus diebus*, ed. by Poirel, pp. 16–17; however, the first and last ages are not named, while *iuuentus* is followed by *maturitas*. The latter is probably to be read as *uirilis aetas*, as Dominique Poirel pointed out to me (email exchange 23 July 2008). I thank him for giving me these two references as well as the following concerning Hugh.

[108] Hugh of Saint-Victor, *De uanitate mundi*, ed. by Migne, lb. I, col. 709 = Hugh of Saint-Victor, *Soliloquium*, ed. by Müller, p. 34. A new critical edition by Cédric Giraud should soon become available. To explain this different list of ages, Dominique Poirel offered a fascinating and refined interpretation: given that, in this text, Hugh expresses a darker vision of life, no age can be at the summit of the arch (email exchange 23 July 2008).

infantia | *pueritia* | *adolescentia* | *iuuentus, 'id est uirilis etas'* | *senectus* | *'senium uel decrepita etas'*[109]

After giving this list, he describes each age in turn but is only really positive when discussing *iuuentus*, 'i.e the age of virility'. Interestingly, he follows it with only one old age, instead of two as above. This fifth and last age is overall quite negatively portrayed. During it, Christ has come, but not because man was finally ready to receive him, the Augustinian approach, but rather because he was quite degenerate.

William of Saint-Thierry (d. 1148)

The great admirer of Bernard of Clairvaux and mystic William of Saint-Thierry had studied in a cathedral school before becoming a monk. In his *De natura corporis and animae*, his definition of the ages of man is strictly medical: he evokes the four ages of the human body in relation to the four humours, and his division is the same as that by the Nestorian Iohannicius:

adolescencia | (25/30) *iuuentus* | (35/40) *senectus* | (55/60) *senium*[110]

Manuscript Linked with the School of Laon (Twelfth Century)

In the Bodleian manuscript Laud. Misc. 277, a variety of texts associated with Anselm of Laon's school, can also be found a description of the six ages of man:

infantia | (7) *pueritia* | (14) *adolescentia* | (28) *iuuentus* or *uirilis aetas* | (56) *senectus*[111]

Once the age of twenty-eight has been reached (after a lower puberty, starting around fourteen, and a higher one, starting around twenty-one), the body does not increase further, and strength starts declining from fifty-six. The author concludes his description of the evolution of the human body, in which he uses the traditional nouns (*infantia*, *pueritia*, *adolescentia*, *iuuentus*, and *senectus*), by saying that the 'age of virility is indeed similar to *iuuentus*' ('virilis enim etas similis est cum iuventute').

[109] Abelard, *Expositio in Hexaemeron*, ed. by Romig, p. 80.

[110] Guillaume de Saint-Thierry, *De natura corporis et animae*, ed. and trans. by Lemoine, pp. 120–22.

[111] Sears, *The Ages of Man*, p. 64, and Lottin, 'Nouveaux fragments théologiques', p. 20, no. 452.

Tractatus quidam de Philosophia et partibus eius (Second Half of the Twelfth Century)

According to Gilbert Dahan, this text, dating from the second half of the twelfth century, is 'chartrain' (linked with Chartres), with some influences from the school of Saint-Victor.[112] Its author tries to match the six ages with the theory of four humours. He gives therefore two definitions, one of six ages and another of four, both preceded by a disclaim of authorship ('secundum quosdam [...] secundum alios'):

infantia | (7) pueritia | (15) adulescentia | (21) iuuentus |
(32/33) uirilis aetas | (50) senectus | (80) senium uel etas decrepita

One should notice in this first definition that *adulescentia* and *iuuentus* have each been shortened significantly:

[infantia + pueritia] | [adulescentia + iuuentus] |
uirilis aetas | [senectus + senium][113]

In this second definition, the regrouping of *adulescentia* with *iuuentus* is justified by the same biblical passage as usual, Ecclesiastes 11. 9. However, when the author associates these four ages with the four elements, four seasons, four humours, and four qualities, he only speaks about *pueritia*, *iuuentus*, *uirilis etas*, and *senectus*.[114]

Robert de Melun (d. 1167)

In his reading of the ages of the world in relation to the ages of man and the four humours in his *Sententie* (1152–60), Robert de Melun has little redeeming to say concerning the first age and the last two, while describing the middle age, *uirilis aetas*, as the apex of life:

infantilis etas | pueritia | adolescentia | virilis etas | senectus | senium vel etas decrepita[115]

[112] Dahan, 'Une Introduction à la philosophie au XII^e^ s.', pp. 155–56.

[113] Dahan, 'Une Introduction à la philosophie au XII^e^ s.', pp. 174–75 and 184–85, and Sears, *The Ages of Man*, p. 78. The description of the last age seems to contain some mistakes: 'Secundum alios, quatuor [etates] sunt, et prima diuiditur in duas: in infantiam et pueritiam; secunda in adolescentiam et iuuentutem; [...] tertia, id est uirilis etas, mansit indiuisa; quartam, id est uirilem etatem, in senectutem et decrepitam etatem.'

[114] Sears, *The Ages of Man*, p. 185.

[115] Robert de Melun, *Sententie*, ed. by Martin, I, lb. I, pars I, c. 17, pp. 202–04.

Richard of Saint-Victor (d. 1173)

In his *Liber exceptionum* (1153–62), Richard follows his master, Hugh of Saint-Victor, and discusses the Augustinian association between the human ages and the ages of the world:

infantia | *pueritia* | *adolescentia* | *juventus* | *virilis etas* | *senectus*[116]

However, as Dominique Poirel pointed out to me, one can also find a reference to the three vigils explained as the three ages of man, which gives place to the more traditional list:

pueritia | *iuuentus* | *senectus*[117]

Alain de Lille (d. 1202–03)

Alain makes Nature speak about the universe in *De planctu naturae* (1160–72). He links the rhythm of one day and the four seasons to the four ages:

infantia | *juventus* | *virilitas* | *senectus*[118]

The third age is the apex, while *senectus* is a clear period of decline.

Julian of Vezelay (d. 1165)

In a sermon nowadays numbered XVII (*c.* 1160/65), he places 'youth' exactly in the middle of life and of the ages, and calls it *adolescentia uel iuuentus*:

infantia | *pueritia* | *adulescentia uel iuuentus* | *senectus* | *senium*[119]

[116] Richard of Saint-Victor, *Liber exceptionum*, ed. by Chatillon, pars II, lb. XI, c. 3, p. 442.

[117] Richard of Saint-Victor, *Liber exceptionum*, ed. by Chatillon, pars II, lb. XIV, c. 18, p. 515.

[118] Alain de Lille, *De planctu naturae*, ed. by Wright, prose 3, p. 454. Alan does not mention *infantia* as such in his list, only the spring of life, but given that he has evoked *infantia* in relation to spring just two sentences above, I chose this name for the first age.

[119] Julien de Vézelay, *Sermons*, ed. and trans. by Vorreux, no. XVII, ll. 181–85, pp. 364–66. See also Romano, 'Julian of Vézelay'.

Hildegard of Bingen (d. 1179)

The famous superior of Rupertsberg has evoked the life cycle many times in her extensive writings. I used the search function for the *Patrologia latina* and Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis in order to find most of the references. Hildegard discussed the life cycle of the *homo*, the human being, and while she gave no indication that her definitions applied to women as well as to men, she also offered no indication to the contrary; it is most probable that she considered it applied to both. Her discourse on the topic of the life cycle is, in the main part, traditional — in the way that she priviledges the fundamental tripartite division — but she was also sensitive to the new trends in the depiction of the ages. What struck me the most was her overall positive discourse on *pueritia*, ignorant but innocent.[120] However, more thorough research (entailing reading all of her work, rather than small extracts as I did) would be necessary to be more affirmative on any of the points made in this section.

In her explanation of the Athanasian creed (*c.* 1170), she evokes the Creation in various stages and relates it to the evolution of man through five ages:

infans | *puer* | *iuuenis* | *senex* | *decrepitus*[121]

She seems to have adopted a similar definition of the life cycle in one passage of her most famous visionary text, *Scivias* (1141–51). Here she writes that it will be possible at the end of time to see inside all human souls as to how they have looked for God 'in infantia uel in pueritia, uel in iuuentute, uel in senectute, uel in finita aetate' — this last one having been replaced by *decrepita aetate* in one early modern edition of the text.[122]

In a different passage of the *Scivias*, it is the tripartite division that can be found when she writes that *homines* cannot transgress the bounds made to their lives by God's providence:

infantia | *iuuentus* | *senectus*[123]

[120] I am not the first to point this out. See for instance Newman, 'Commentary', p. 294.

[121] Hildegard of Bingen, *Explanatio symboli sancti Athanasii*, ed. by Evans, p. 118.

[122] Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, ed. by Führkötter and Carlevaris, pars III, visio 12, c. 7 (commentarii), p. 610.

[123] Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, ed. by Führkötter and Carlevaris, pars I, visio 3, c. 25, p. 56. The same tripartite division is to be found in Hildegard of Bingen, *Liber vite meritorum*, ed. by Carlevaris, pars VI, c. 8, p. 267. English translation: Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, trans. by Hart and Bishop, p. 103. This visionary text would have been written between 1158 and 1163.

In another visionary text, the *Liber divinorum operum* (written later on, between 1163 and 1174), she uses a similar tripartite division of the life cycle at least three times. In the first instance, she reads the characteristics of the human body as signs of the perfect creation. In the same way that the body can be divided into three sections of equal lengths, the human life can be divided into three ages: *pueritia*, *adolescentia*, and *senectus*.[124] Further on she refers to a division in five stages which is, astonishingly, associated with the (supposedly four) seasons, which are hinted at but not listed. She creates an opposition between the first four ages of life, which produce and perfect good actions/fruits, and the last age that seems (at first glance) incapable of producing and perfecting good actions but rather destroys them like the effect the cold of winter has on fruits. Her list has become: *Pueritia*, *Adolescentia*, *Iuuentus*, *Senectus*, *Decrepita etas*.[125] However a few short chapters later, she comes back to the issue of good works decorating a good soul like clothes, and seems this time to read the last age, *decrepita etas*, as death. There, she mentions three ages: *pueritia*, *iuuentus*, and *senectus*.[126] Finally, in another section of the book altogether, she uses again a tripartite division of humans between the *senes*, *iuuenes*, and *pueri*.[127]

pueritia | *adolescentia* or *iuuentus* | *senectus*

Even though, as the definitions I gave from the *Liber divinorum operum* seem to illustrate, Hildegard probably associated *adolescentia* with *iuuentus*, I found one instance when it was tied to *pueritia*; interestingly it concerns a female figure.[128]

Therefore the tripartite division can be found throughout Hildegard's main three visionary texts, written between 1141 and 1174.

[124] Hildegard of Bingen, *Liber divinorum operum*, ed. by Derolez and Dronke, pars I, visio 4, c. 53, p. 186.

[125] Hildegard of Bingen, *Liber divinorum operum*, ed. by Derolez and Dronke, pars I, visio 4, c. 72 (commentarii), p. 204.

[126] Hildegard of Bingen, *Liber divinorum operum*, ed. by Derolez and Dronke, pars I, visio 4, c. 78 (commentarii), p. 209. This time, it is *senectus* which is associated with winter.

[127] Hildegard of Bingen, *Liber divinorum operum*, ed. by Derolez and Dronke, pars III, visio 2, c. 3 (commentarii), p. 356.

[128] In more than one passage, Hildegard makes *iuuentus* immediately follow *pueritia*. For instance, in her commentary on the rule of Saint Benedict (dating *c.* 1158), Hildegard discusses its Chapter 70 requiring the *pueri* to be under the surveillance of all the brothers until the age of fifteen, after which they enter *iuuentus* and other forms of punishments are needed (Hildegard of Bingen, *De regula sancti Benedicti*, ed. by Feiss, p. 96). Her poems on Saint Rupert, the saint of her monastery, who would have died at the age of twenty, seem to distinguish clearly between his *pueritia* and his *adolescentia* (Newman, 'Commentary', pp. 297–98). However, in a

Finally, one can notice in her writings an episodic appearance of a middle age separated from *iuuentus* and *senectus*. Once, in the *Liber vite meritorum*, she seems to distinguish *pueritia*, *iuuentus*, and *senectus* from such a middle age.[129] Probably not surprisingly, it is in her letters that one finds two instances of these less traditional divisions of the life cycle. Both letters were written before 1173 to members of the clergy. In letter 296r, Hildegard speaks of the feebleness of each age of man and how one should behave in these various stages:

pueritia | *iuuentus* | *uirilis fortitudo* | *plena stabilitas*[130]

In letter 221r to a provost (before 1173) who had already reached *senectus*, she encourages him to get rid of his vices as he no longer has the opportunity to do bad actions and then repent as in the previous ages: *pueritia*, *iuuentus*, *matura aetas*, *senectus/decrepita aetas*.[131] I am hesitant to consider the *uirilis fortitudo* of one definition as being the equivalent to the *matura aetas* of the other definition. Indeed, in letter 296r, the third age is still the prey of lascivity and placed under a master; it seems doubtful that Hildegard would have conceived of this age as 'mature'. More probably her perception of old adulthood (sometimes called *aetas matura* but more often *senectus*) is one of plenitude (*plena stabilitas*), while she often adds after it, but not systematically, a last age of decrepitude and death (called *senectus* or *decrepita aetas*). Let us not forget that she wrote most of her masterpieces while she was past fifty years old. It is doubtful she considered herself in complete decrepitude while bearing so many fruits, but more probably considered herself to be in the *plena stabilitas* of maturity/*senectus*.

description and commentary of a vision in *Scivias*, she calls a (female) figure both an *adolescens* and a *puer*, who has not yet fully reached the *uirilis aetas*; Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, ed. by Führkötter and Carlevaris, pars III, visio 3, linea 49 and c. 6 (commentarii), linea 290.

[129] 'Cum enim homo carnale desiderium perficit, hoc quod in hoc libenter operatur uanitas dicitur: quoniam in prima puerili etate sua ludos amat, et postea in iuuentute sua lasciuiam amplectitur, deinde autem perfectius scit et cognoscit que bona et que mala sint; et tunc operum pueritie ac iuuentutis eum tedebit, quasi numquam in eis uixisset. Cum que ad senectutem peruenerit, in illa arescet; et tunc suspirando et plangendo priorum etatum suarum recordabitur, quas tamen non poterit habere'; Hildegard of Bingen, *Liber vite meritorum*, ed. by Carlevaris, pars I, c. 85 (commentarii), p. 52.

[130] Hildegard of Bingen, *Epistolarium*, ed. by Van Acker and Klaes, III, letter 296r, pp. 55–57. English translation: Hildegard of Bingen, *The Letters*, trans. by Baird and Ehrman, pp. 96–98.

[131] Hildegard of Bingen, *Epistolarium*, ed. by Van Acker and Klaes, II, letter 221r, pp. 487–88. English translation: Hildegard of Bingen, *The Letters*, trans. by Baird and Ehrman, p. 16.

Werner, Abbot of Sankt-Blasien in the Black Forest (d. 1178)

Preaching the necessity to be always ready to receive the Lord, Werner explains that death can happen any time in life, and mentions the ages of man:

pueritia | *adulescentia* | *iuuentus* | *senectus*[132]

Explaining in another text the parable of the workers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20. 1–16), he offers a slightly different list:

pueritia | *adolescentia* | *iuuentus or matura aetas* | *senectus or aetas iam declinans ad senium* | *senium or decrepita aetas or ultima senectus*[133]

Romuald, Archbishop of Salerno (d. 1181)

In his *Chronicon* (or *De aetatibus*) (*c.* 1178), Romuald establishes the usual Augustinian correlation between the ages of man and the ages of the world:

infantia | *(7) pueritia* | *(14) adolescentia* | *(28) iuuentus* | *(50) senectus* | *(79) etas decrepita*[134]

Jean Beleth (d. 1182)

This Parisian professor has very traditional definitions of the life cycle. In his *Summa de ecclesiasticis officiis*, he interprets the three vigils in Luke 12. 35–40 in the same way as Gregory the Great and Honorius:

pueritia | *iuuentus* | *senectus*[135]

In the same book, he also compares the seven canonical hours with the seven ages of man:

infantia | *pueritia* | *adolescentia* | *iuuentus* | *senectus* | *senium* | *decrepita aetas*[136]

But in the following sentence he gives different names to the last two ages: *decrepita aetas* and *completorium finis nostre uite*.

[132] Werner of Sankt-Blasien, *Sermo de adventu Domini*, ed. by Migne. On Werner's dates, see Brambilla, 'Alle origini dell enciclopedismo medioevale', pp. 251–52.

[133] Werner of Sankt-Blasien, *Dominica tertia in septuagesima*, ed. by Migne, lb. 1, col. 844.

[134] Romuald of Salerno, *Chronicon*, ed. by Garufi, p. 5.

[135] Beleth, *Summa de ecclesiasticis officiis*, ed. by Douteil, c. 22h, p. 47.

[136] Beleth, *Summa de ecclesiasticis officiis*, ed. by Douteil, c. 28a, p. 55.

Godefroy of Saint-Victor (d. after 1194)

One finds the same theme as that presented by the previous two authors in Godefroy's *Microcosmus* (*c.* 1185), an allegorical commentary on the beginning of Genesis:

infantia | *pueritia* | *adulescentia* | *iuuentus* | *senectus* | *decrepita aetas*[137]

Eberhard of Béthune (d. *c.* 1212)

In a passage from his *Graecismus* (end of the twelfth century to the beginning of the thirteenth), in which he presents a list of the ages of man, Eberhard attempts an Isidorean explanation of each term:

infans | *puer* | *adolescens* | *iuuenis* | *uir* | *senex*[138]

Sicard of Cremona (d. 1215)

In two passages of his *Mitralis de Officiis* (*c.* 1200), Sicard of Cremona establishes correlations between the six ages of man plus the end of life and the seven canonical hours or the seven Sundays of the Septuagesim and the ages of the world:

infantia | *pueritia* | *adulescentia* | *iuuentus* | *senectus* | *senium*[139]

Non-Western Authors Translated into Latin prior to the Thirteenth Century (Table 2)

Hunayn ibn Ishaq, Known in Latin as Iohannicius (d. 873)

The ninth-century *Isagoge ad Tegni Galieni* by the Nestorian Hunayn ibn Ishaq is an introduction to Galen's medicine. It was translated into Latin by the end of the eleventh century, perhaps by Constantine the African. It compares man's life to the curve of an arrow in the air.[140] The perfect summit, *iuuentus*, is reached around

[137] Godefroy de Saint-Victor, *Le Microcosmus*, ed. by Delhaye, pp. 40–41.

[138] Eberhard of Béthune, *Graecismus*, ed. by Wröbel, c. 12, pp. 104–05.

[139] Sicard of Cremona, *Mitralis de Officiis*, ed. by Sarbak and Weinrich, lb. IV, c. 3, p. 241, and lb. VI, c. 8, pp. 425–27.

[140] See Jacquart and Micheau, *La Médecine arabe*, pp. 96–107, and Newton, 'Constantine

twenty-five/thirty years old and ends around thirty-five/forty, in other words it lasts some five to fifteen years. In comparison with contemporary Western definitions of the ages, decline and final old age start quite early:

adolescentia | *(25/30) iuuentus* | *(35/40) senectus* | *(55/60) senium*[141]

Ali ibn al-Abbas al-Magusi (d. 982–94)

Al-Magusi's *Kītab al-Malikī* was partly translated and partly rewritten into Latin by Constantine the African in his *Pantegni* (*c.* 1087). In this work, the last old age starts even earlier than Hunayn's in one edition (forty-five/fifty), but later in another (sixty):

pueritia (comprising *infantia* and *pueritia* or *adolescentia*, each lasting 15 years) | *(30) iuuentus* | *(35/40) senectus* | *(45/50 or 60) senium*[142]

The second translator of the work, Stephen of Antioch, who stayed closer to the original text, changed somewhat the terms used in his 1127 text:

pueritie etas | *iuuentus* | *grandiorum etas* | *senectus*[143]

the African and Monte Cassino'. See also the remark by Jacquart on the quality of the edition of this text, Jacquart and Micheau, *La Médecine arabe*, p. 16n.

[141] Iohannicius, *Isagoge*, ed. by Maurach, p. 155.

[142] al-Majusi, *Pantechni decem libri theorices et decem practices*, trans. by Constantine the African, lb. I, c. 21, fol. 4[r] (also transcribed by Sears, *The Ages of Man*, p. 166 n. 92) offers '.XLV. vel .l.' (forty-nine or fifty) as the age limit between *senectus* and *senium*. However, sixty is to be found in Constantine the African, *Summi in omni philosophia viri Constantini Africani*, p. 17, and in Constantine the African, *L'arte universale della medicina*, trans. by Malato and de Martini, pp. 66–67, based on manuscripts in the Vatican. These last two sources are not completely reliable. The penultimate reference seems to be rich in transcription mistakes, giving for instance thirty as the end of *pueritia*, and again thirty or forty as the end of *iuuentus* (instead of thirty-five or forty). The two translators have translated *senectus* by *maturità*, p. 121; however their Italian text does not really correspond to their Latin text: for instance they do not give any age limit. Obviously, ideally, it would be necessary to return to the manuscripts. See also Jordan, 'The Fortune of Constantine's *Pantegni*', and Jacquart and Micheau, *La Médecine arabe*, pp. 103–07.

[143] al-Majusi, *Liber totius medicine necessaria continens*, trans. by Stephen of Antioch, I, I, 21, s.p.

Ptolemy (Second Century)

Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* was only translated into Latin in 1138 by Plato of Tivoli. In it, he associates the various ages of man to the 'planets' surrounding earth: the moon, Mercury, Venus, the sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. His approach was not medical and therefore is quite different from the three other authors of Table 2. The best illustration of this is his very late dates of entry for *senectus* and *senium*:

infantia | (4) pueritia | (14) adolescentia | (22) iuuentus | (41) uirilis aetas | (56) senectus | (68) senium[144]

Avicenna (d. 1037)

In his *Liber Canonis* (translated by Gerard of Cremona in the last quarter of the twelfth century), Avicenna describes the ages of man in a relatively similar fashion to the one found in the *Pantegni* or the *Isagoge ad Tegni Galieni*. The perspective is essentially medical and physical, with *iuuentus*, 'the age of beauty', occupying the summit of a half circle. Once again, decline starts quite early (thirty-five/forty), but he is the only medical author in this group of three starting the last old age no earlier than sixty years old. Nevertheless, this is still ten years younger than all the Western definitions from the sixth to the eleventh century which give a specific age:

etas adholendi (or etas adolescentie) | (30) etas consistendi (or etas pulcritudinis) | (35/40) etas minuendi cum virtus non admittitur (or etas senectutis) | (60) etas minuendi cum manifesta uirtutis debilitate (or etas senium)[145]

According to Burrow, Avicenna's definition of the life cycle was quite influential in the West.[146]

[144] Ptolemy, *Quadripartitum*, trans. by Plato of Tivoli, lb. IV, c. 9, s.p. See also Sears, *The Ages of Man*, pp. 48–50 and Burrow, *The Ages of Man*, pp. 197–98.

[145] Avicenna, *Liber canonis*, trans. by Gerard of Cremona, lb. I, fen I, doc. III, c. 3. On Gerard of Cremona, see Jacquart and Micheau, *La Médecine arabe*, pp. 147–53.

[146] Burrow, *The Ages of Man*, p. 23.

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Baptism and Infant Burial in Anglo-Saxon England

Sally Crawford

Developmentally, babies are not like older children. They are completely dependent on their parents or carers and can do nothing for themselves. Gradually, the baby transforms into a more independent being — seeing, moving, walking, talking, eating, and taking a larger part in the social circle. At what point does a 'baby' become a 'child' in society? When it walks? When it talks? In many cultures the length of time the baby has lived together with the developmental changes associated with that survival hold deep significance. The baby is not considered fully human and is not possessed of an individual identity until certain chronological or developmental boundaries have been crossed.

The Old English words for children and infancy reflect the complexity associated with trying to differentiate between children, babies, and adults, where 'differences' are created as much by social circumstances and developmental abilities as by any chronological age.[1] The Old English word *cild*, for example, could refer to any non-adult, including babies, but like the modern 'boy', it had no absolute upper age limit and was applied to men who were clearly adults in terms of chronological age.[2] Qualifiers could be added to *cild* to create a compound which signified a baby, though not all of these were absolutely specific, either: *cildgeong*, for example, could be used to mean a baby but could also be used less specifically to mean 'youth'.[3] Descriptive compounds could be used to provide a much clearer, specific meaning based on the child's chronological age and devel-

[1] Orme, *Medieval Children*, p. 3.

[2] Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 51.

[3] Hall, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, p. 68.

Medieval Life Cycles: Continuity and Change, ed. by Isabelle Cochelin and Karen Smyth
INTERNATIONAL MEDIEVAL RESEARCH 18 BREPOLS PUBLISHERS (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013)
pp. 55–80 10.1484/M.IMR-EB.1.100782

opment; *nicendum cild* (a new [born] child); *fulboren cild* (a full-term child, i.e. not a stillbirth); *cradolcild*, a 'cradle child'; and *unsprecede cild* (a child that does not speak).

Þa unsprecendlic cild was used by Old English scribes to gloss the Latin *infans*.[4] Arguably, *unsprecede cild* is nothing more than a literal translation of the Latin, but the phrase carried with it some fundamental implications for the dumb child. An inability to speak carried with it huge social consequences within Anglo-Saxon society. Speaking was at the heart of the individual's relationship with society. In terms of normal social interaction, a dumb person could not participate in normal social and legal transactions and negotiations. The inability to swear an oath gave a dumb man the social status of a child, unable to take responsibility for his own actions or his own property, as King Alfred's fourteenth law insisted: 'If anyone is born dumb or deaf, so that he can neither deny nor confess his wrongdoings, his father shall pay compensation for his misdeeds.'[5]

An inability to speak was also loaded with spiritual consequences. The crucial role of speech in salvation was illustrated in the Old English version of the legend of Saint Christopher. In Old English literature, Saint Christopher was characterized as a dog-headed monster whose only form of vocal expression was a bark.[6] When Saint Christopher was converted to Christianity by an angel his monstrous appearance remained unchanged. The physical manifestation of his change from monster to human was his new ability to speak, which in turn proved his salvation because now he could verbalize a belief in the Christian God.[7] This interpretation of the legend of Saint Christopher was based on a long theological tradition; Saint Augustine, whose writings had a measurable influence on Anglo-Saxon verse and theology, argued that rational beings, even if monsters, were human and could be saved, and speech was a clear way to demonstrate rationality.[8]

There are parallels to the Saint Christopher story in the Venerable Bede's account of one of the miracles performed by the seventh-century Anglo-Saxon bishop, Saint John of Beverley. According to Bede, a boy who had been dumb since birth, and who also suffered from an unpleasant scalp complaint, was cured

[4] Venezky and Di Paolo Healey, *A Microfiche Concordance to Old English*, pp. 322–23.

[5] 'Gif mon sie dumb oððe deaf geboren, þæt he ne mæg his synna onsecggan ne geandettan, bete se fæder his misdæda': Attenborough, *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, p. 71.

[6] Lionarons, 'From Monster to Martyr', p. 177.

[7] Lionarons, 'From Monster to Martyr', p. 177.

[8] Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, ed. by Dombart and Kalb, bk XVI, chap. 8.

of both his unpleasant appearance and his speechlessness.[9] The Bishop ordered a physician to cure the boy of his scabby head, but the dumbness was cured by a miracle. Why were the two conditions treated differently, one by a miracle and one by 'rational' medicine? It might be argued that dumbness was a much more difficult condition to treat than a case of scabby head, but if the boy was suffering from a condition known as being 'tongue tied', John's actions in effecting the miracle, particularly his holding the youth's tongue to bless, may have produced a simple cure by breaking the frenulum which was restricting the tongue's movement.[10] Given Saint John's medical training under Archbishop Theodore, such a cure would have been well within his capabilities. It might be argued that while John was aware he was performing a simple physical cure, the restoration of speech to this dumb and unsightly boy might have appeared miraculous to onlookers, but Bede might equally have chosen to represent the restoration of the boy's hair as a miracle, too. Something much more symbolic was taking place in this story: Bede was not describing a simple cure when he discussed the restoration of the boy's speech; he was describing something more profound — a spiritual transformation, not a physical one. A boy without speech was in the same spiritual condition as a monstrous Saint Christopher. Without speech, he could not testify to his belief in Christ and therefore neither he nor his community could be certain that his soul could be saved.

In these terms, an infant's inability to speak placed it in a dangerously ambivalent spiritual state. In his *Homilies*, Abbot Ælfric of Eynsham, one of the most learned scholars of late Anglo-Saxon England, carefully explained how a baby without speech could still be saved:

> a child without speech is baptized through the belief of his father and mother and the godfather who speaks for the child, and pledges God that the child will keep to the Christianity of God's teaching, because the words that Christ spoke are very terrible; that no unbaptized man may attain eternal life.[11]

The eleventh-century Anglo-Latin *Life* of Saint Rumwold contains the most detailed account of a baptism from Anglo-Saxon England, and in this account the precocious saint was said to have announced his faith at the moment of birth,

[9] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. by Colgrave and Mynors, v. 2.

[10] Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England,* p. 100.

[11] 'Þa unsprecendan cild hi fullodon ðurh geleafan þæs fæder and ðære meder and se godfæder wæs þæs cildes forspreca and borh wið god þæt hit heolde þone cristendom be godes tæcunge for ðan ðe se cwyðe us swuðe egeslic þe crist cwæð þæt nan ungefullod mann ne becymð to ðam ecan life': Ælfric, *Catholic Homilies*, ed. by Godden, Homily 3, p. 26, ll. 252–57.

crying out three times 'I am a Christian', declaring his faith in the Trinity, and demanding to be made a catechumen.[12] The significance of this miracle is that the baby Rumwold was able to declare himself instantly a rational being through speech, thus bypassing the stage of being an *unsprecede cild* and, more importantly, obviating the need to have anyone speak for him.

Until the introduction of Christianity towards the end of the sixth century and into the seventh century, and with it, baptism, there is no evidence for any particular rite of passage or initiation ceremony marking the end of infancy in Anglo-Saxon England.[13] Documentary references to the treatment of children in the pre-Christian period are scant, but they contain no references at all to age thresholds or ritual behaviour marking any recognition of transitional ages or life stages associated with earliest childhood. However, infant baptism was introduced into Anglo-Saxon England from at least the seventh century from the Roman and Frankish church, where it was a norm, and certainly by the time the English council of *Clofesho* was held in AD 747 it was assumed that baptism was primarily for infants.[14] By the late tenth century, an ivory carving from Winchester of the baptism of Christ depicted Jesus as a baby. The quintessential body associated with baptism was no longer that of the adult, but that of a little child. As Peter Cramer commented, this fundamental conceptual shift 'put the dramatic stress of the old rite of conversion in a quite different place [...] the small body of the child with its vulnerable nakedness and its suggestions of uncertainties and precariousness, perhaps replaced water as the central symbol of baptism'.[15]

Anglo-Saxon law codes emphasized how important and urgent was the performance of this ritual: according to a late seventh-century law of King Ine of Wessex, infants were to be baptized not less than thirty days after birth, and there were serious penalties for churchmen failing to do their baptismal duties, as well as serious penalties for any child not baptized, specifically exclusion from normal burial places and normative burial treatment.[16] One entry in an early eleventh-century penitential of Burchard of Worms, for example, decreed that unbaptized dead infants should be buried in a remote place and pierced through with a stake to prevent the baby from rising up and injuring the community, and stillborn

[12] Foot, '"By Water in the Spirit"', p. 171.

[13] Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 75–77.

[14] Fisher, *Christian Initiation*; Morris, 'Baptismal Places', p. 15; Thacker, 'Monks, Preaching and Pastoral Care', p. 154.

[15] Cramer, *Baptism and Change in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 69.

[16] Morris, 'Baptismal Places', p. 15.

babies and women who died in childbirth were to be treated in a similar way.[17] It is clear that, from a very early stage, the rite of baptism was perceived to change the babies' status, introducing them to the fellowship of the Church and making them equal with all other Christians.[18] However, infants who had been baptized and died immediately after baptism were considered to be 'paradigmatically innocent' and achieved a special status.[19] The 'special status' of an infant dying immediately after baptism was, perhaps, reflected in the fact that named individual babies who died shortly after birth are almost entirely absent from the Old English documentary record. An exception to this rule involves two children who died 'wearing their chrism clothes': Æthelhun and Æthelfrith, daughters of Eadwine and Æthelburg of Northumbria. Not only are these two children named, but details were also given of their place of burial, in the church at York.[20] Two further dead children of Eadwine and Æthelburg are named by Bede; Wuscfrea and Eanfleda. Though Bede implies that they were baptized in England, they died in Frankia *in cildhade* ('in childhood') and were buried in church 'with the honour due to their birth and innocence'.[21] The heightened innocence perceived to be possessed by newly baptized infants gave them special status amongst the dead. In the early ninth-century poem *Carmen de Abbatibus* by Æthelwulf, the poet offered a vision of the otherworld in which the dreamer was led by his own two dead babies, still in their baptismal robes.[22] Anglo-Saxon confessional and penitential texts reinforced this picture of the newly baptized baby achieving a special status: the giving of unction to the sick will make a soul 'as clean after his death as that of the child who dies immediately after baptism'.[23] Baptism, followed immediately by death, gave the child greater purity of soul than could be achieved at any other stage in the life course.

Though baptism of all children was a necessity in theory, in practice there were a number of obstacles and deterrents, of a practical as well as spiritual nature, to

[17] Burchard of Worms, *Decretum*, ed. by Migne, cols 974–75; Caciola, 'Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual', p. 29.

[18] Foot, '"By Water in the Spirit"', pp. 172–73.

[19] Thompson, *Dying and Death in Later Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 74; Cramer, *Baptism and Change in the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 69–70.

[20] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. by Colgrave and Mynors, II. 14.

[21] 'æfter gerisenre are heora æðelnisse 7 unscæðednisse': Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. by Colgrave and Mynors, II. 20.

[22] Æthelwulf, *De abbatibus*, ed. by Campbell, and see also Lynch, *Christianizing Kinship*, p. 129.

[23] Thompson, *Dying and Death in Later Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 70.

carrying out the ritual. The first problem that presented itself was in the location of the baptismal rite.[24] There are only a dozen known Anglo-Saxon fonts, and of these, two may be later fonts reusing earlier Anglo-Saxon sculptural material.[25] None of these fonts certainly predates the late ninth/early tenth century, with the majority appearing to belong to the late Anglo-Saxon period. Given the large number of Norman fonts surviving in English churches it seems unlikely that Anglo-Saxon fonts were subject to widespread destruction, and a more plausible explanation for their absence is that they were either built of a perishable material, such as wood, or that they were never constructed in the first place.[26] If infants were not being baptized in church fonts, where did baptism take place? Bede refers to a few public, open-air baptisms at river sites by royal centres, but these were probably exceptional events.[27] Saint Rumwold's baptism, according to his hagiographer, took place almost immediately after his birth. His royal parents had wanted to invite neighbouring kings to stand as godparents to Rumwold, implying that they had anticipated a formal, public event, but the baby Rumwold insisted on being baptized and received by the two priests who had been present at his birth, and his baptismal font was a hollow stone found lying close to the house, in which the baptismal water was blessed by the priests.[28] The implication of this miracle tale is that royal parents might expect their royal offspring to be baptized and received by neighbouring kings in a public display designed to reinforce social and political bonds as much as to ensure the salvation of the baby, and that an ad hoc baptism, using any available receptacle as a font, was unusual, but did not invalidate the baptism.

In contrast to Frankish and Italian episcopal churches of this period, churches designated for baptism alone do not seem to have existed in the first centuries after the conversion of Anglo-Saxon England.[29] More common were structures designed for the dual purposes of baptism and elite burial. For example, an account of the eighth-century cathedral at Canterbury noted that a church had been constructed to the east of the cathedral for the dual purposes of baptism and

[24] Morris, 'Baptismal Places', p. 17.

[25] Morris, 'Baptismal Places', p. 17; Foot, '"By Water in the Spirit"', pp. 181–83.

[26] Morris, 'Baptismal Places', p. 17.

[27] Morris, 'Baptismal Places', p. 19.

[28] Foot, '"By Water in the Spirit"', p. 171. Rumwold first refused the 'urn or jar' offered by his father as a container for the baptismal water, perhaps reflecting eleventh-century ideas about the need for stone fonts — see Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, p. 462.

[29] Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, p. 37; Foot, '"By Water in the Spirit"', pp. 180–81.

moratorium for the bishops, and the royal mausoleum at Repton (Derbyshire) may also have served as a baptistery.[30] The link between baptism (rebirth) and death was made by Paul in Colossians 2. 12, and the dual and opposing concepts of baptism and burial (with Christ), font and tomb, baptistery and mausoleum are embedded in medieval thought.[31]

However, it is only from the millennium that there is firm archaeological evidence for the construction of spaces dedicated to the process of infant baptism in non-episcopal churches. There is some evidence to suggest that one of the functions of the western towers added to Anglo-Saxon churches from this date was as a baptistery; the western cell of the tower church at Barton-on-Humber, for example, showed traces of a font-base and soakaway.[32]

There was some disagreement over who was capable of performing a baptism, especially in the early Anglo-Saxon church. Bishops certainly had the right to baptize, and Bede's accounts record the baptism of infants (and adults) by bishops on holy days at royal sites.[33] Deacons and priests may not have been allowed to baptize at first — this may be the root of Augustine's refusal to regard baptism within the British church as valid — but Bede records that Paulinus left his deacon in York to continue teaching and baptizing in AD 633, and Saint Cedd, also according to Bede, ordained priests and deacons to work with him to assist in preaching and the administration of baptism.[34] The lack of clarity over who was and was not entitled to baptism cannot have led to confidence in the ritual: even one of Bishop John of Beverley's own priests, Herebald, was the recipient of an invalid baptism, according to Bede.[35] There is still a debate over the date at which the rank-and-file clergy regularly performed the sacrament of baptism, thus making the ritual readily available to the community, and it is possible that this did not happen until the establishment of parish churches after the tenth century.[36]

[30] Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury*, p. 51; Biddle, 'Archaeology, Architecture and the Cult of Saints', pp. 16–22.

[31] Davies, *The Architectural Setting of Baptism*; Lynch, *Christianizing Kinship*; Morris, 'Baptismal Places', p. 19; Foot, ""By Water in the Spirit"", p. 181.

[32] Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, p. 460; Rodwell and Rodwell, 'St Peter's Church'.

[33] Morris, 'Baptismal Places', p. 19.

[34] Thomas, *Christianity in Roman Britain*, p. 209; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. by Colgrave and Mynors, v. 20 and v. 22.

[35] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. by Colgrave and Mynors, v. 6.

[36] Parsons, 'The Church and its Architecture', p. 281.

Finding someone to baptize a baby, and travelling to the place where baptism could take place — whether that was an episcopal church, a royal/ritual/meeting site, or some other location — and even, perhaps, having to wait for the appropriate holy day for a baptism, would all have presented a challenge for new parents.[37] The very act of trying to transport the child to a conjunction of a baptizer and a baptismal place may have been enough to endanger the lives of the newborn child, unless the baby, like Saint Rumwold, belonged to an elite group and had priests present at its birth. In such circumstance, the tale recorded by Eddius Stephanus of the woman presenting her dead baby to Bishop Wilfrid to baptize on one of his trips out into the countryside may encapsulate the fact that, for anyone living away from royal and ecclesiastical centres in seventh- to ninth-century Anglo-Saxon England, baptism of a living baby was more of a hypothetical concept than a practical reality.[38] It is possible that a reduction in permissible delay in getting a child baptized in secular and canon law from around AD 800 was linked to an increase in the numbers of local churches and priests, making baptism more accessible, but it would appear that only after *c.* AD 1000 was there a proliferation of minster churches, and an increase in the size of churches into different compartments, allowing the western tower to function as a baptistery.[39]

In theory, then, the rite of baptism should have ensured that all infants, in spite of their speechlessness, should have been part of the Christian church — and with it, the Christian burial ritual — within a month of their birth. On the other hand, any child that had not been baptized should have been excluded from normal burial ritual, and those excluded might number the stillborn and those who died immediately after birth.

The death and disposal of an infant presents any community with specific challenges. First, normal methods of disposing of adult bodies are not necessarily feasible for infant bodies. Infants are notoriously difficult to cremate, and burial of infant bodies presents other problems — it is very difficult to dig a small hole appropriate to the size of the body, but deep enough to ensure that the infant body will not be dug up again at a later date by scavenging animals such as dogs and foxes.[40] Much of the perceived difference between 'normal' burial and the disposal of infant bodies may be explained in terms of the need to find alternative ways of dealing with the physical problems posed by the disposal of the

[37] Morris, 'Baptismal Places', p. 15.

[38] Stephanus, *The Life of Bishop Wilfred*, ed. and trans. by Colgrave, p. 38.

[39] Morris, 'Baptismal Places', pp. 16–18.

[40] Crawford, 'Children, Death and the Afterlife', p. 83.

infant body. Furthermore, the disposal of an infant body may need to meet different social and emotional needs to the disposal of an adult. Infant deaths are never 'natural'. In the 'natural' order of things, a baby should grow into an adult. The 'unnaturalness' of infant death offers an additional, significant layer of tension and unease to the disposal of the infant body, and studies of death and infant burial in many societies have demonstrated that the body of the dead infant, liminal to society, outside normal 'adult' ritual, may be invested with powerful symbolism and complex ideologies that transcend the boundaries of 'normal' burial practice.[41]

Unlike an adult, an infant rarely has any significant 'role' or 'place' in adult society. Though infants may be present, they do not actively participate in social and communal activities. Where they have a part to play in such activities, even where they are central players in the event, as at a baptism, infants are effectively objects, being manipulated by and spoken for by adults, and infant bodies confuse the boundaries between 'object' and 'person' in the burial ritual too. The infant's lack of role within society may also mean that the infant was effectively 'outside' social laws and conventions; the infant is 'a stranger to the public face of its own community', so that the death and burial of an infant, more than any other social group, could be a private, intimate, and personal affair, bypassing 'normal' conventions.[42] As such, patternings in infant burial may reflect the moment at which changing social conditions impacted on adult perceptions of the society at a most personal level. Features, patterns, and anomalies in the archaeological evidence for the disposal of infant bodies express adult anxieties and aspirations, and as such, infant bodies offer a sensitive barometer to cultural and social changes in society as a whole.

From around the early seventh century onwards, when Anglo-Saxon England underwent a process of conversion to Christianity, there were significant changes to the way the dead were buried. Prior to the conversion, the burial ritual consisted of cremation or inhumation of the dead, often with a range of grave goods, typically gendered (beads, brooches, and other jewellery with women, and weaponry with men), in mortuary areas which were generally set apart from settlements. In the seventh century, there was a noticeable shift in the burial ritual, marked by a dramatic decline, to the point of abandonment, of cremation as a form of disposal; changes to the range and frequency of grave goods (there was

[41] Crawford, 'Children, Death and the Afterlife'. For anthropological and archaeological studies of infant burial, see especially Scott, *The Archaeology of Infancy and Infant Death*.

[42] Scott, *The Archaeology of Infancy and Infant Death*, p. 126.

a decline in the percentage of the mortuary population buried with grave goods, a change in the type of jewellery buried with women, and a dramatic reduction in the amount of weaponry buried in male graves); and the establishment of new burial areas, still separate from the settlements. This phase of burial ritual, lasting from around 700 to 850 — the conversion period — is generally termed the 'Final Phase'.[43] It is not until the tenth century that there is significant archaeological evidence for churchyard burial, although recent excavations have shown that, even in the later Anglo-Saxon period, not all cemeteries were located next to a church.[44]

The transition from 'pagan' to 'Christian' burial ritual in Anglo-Saxon England was not a clear-cut process, and the complexity of identifying the point at which the religion of the mortuary population changed from 'pagan' to Christian is a problem relevant to Late Roman and early medieval European mortuary studies as a whole.[45] Ultimately, burial in churchyards became the norm, but from the Roman period on there were a number of places where the bodies of the population could be disposed of which were not within the churchyard but were not necessarily 'non-normative' or 'non-Christian'. The location of infant burials within the medieval mortuary ritual of Western Europe is a developing area of study, but the extent to which baptism — a specific, age-related ritual, which brought with it specific rules about the disposal of dead infants — can be seen to have had a visible effect on actual burial practice in Anglo-Saxon England, is still to be explored.[46] The definitive association of baptism with babies within church iconography by the tenth century is evidence that the ritual of baptism led to a very progressive and real change in the perception of childhood in Anglo-Saxon England. Can the location of babies in later Anglo-Saxon contexts shed any light on this apparent change in attitudes towards the infant, and can the burial of babies therefore add anything to the debate about the 'Christianization' of the mortuary ritual? It is in this context that this paper will study the treatment of infant bodies in Anglo-Saxon England through the period of conversion to Christianity and the establishment of burial in churchyards.

[43] Southworth, *Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries*; Geake, *The Use of Grave Goods*.

[44] Boddington, 'Models of Burial, Settlement and Worship'; Lucy and Reynolds, 'Burial in Early Medieval England and Wales'.

[45] Cleary, 'Putting the Dead in their Place', especially pp. 135–36; Lauwers, *Naissance du cimetière*.

[46] Specific studies include Garnotel and Fabre, 'La Place de l'enfant médiéval dans l'espace des morts'; Treffort, '"Sinite parvulos venire ad me ..."'; Alexandre-Bidon and Lett, *Les Enfants au Moyen Âge*, especially pp. 48–54.

One distinct characteristic of the earlier, pagan furnished Anglo-Saxon cemeteries is the under-representation of infants in the mortuary population.[47] The archaeological evidence poses some well-known and recognized problems of interpretation. Although perinatal and postnatal deaths should have been high (up to a hundred deaths per thousand live births) in practice, infants are missing from the earlier Anglo-Saxon mortuary populations. A percentage of these absences are explicable in terms of survival and recovery. Infant bones are more likely to dissolve and become archaeologically invisible than adult bones. Infants were less likely to have been buried to the same depth as adult burials, and so their bones are more likely to have been disturbed or removed by later activities. Infant bones are also less readily identified than adult bones: even where excavation is of a high standard, infant bones are often not identified until the post-excavation stage, and it has to be assumed that, where soil is not sieved, the tiny, fragile remains of some infant burials may be missed altogether during the excavation. However, it has been argued that there are good reasons for attributing the significant lack of infants in early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries to depositional factors rather than to problems of bone survival or difficulties with the excavation process. On sites where bone preservation is good, especially in cemeteries dug into chalk, where all pits and graves are clearly visible, it is evident that infants are missing because they were never buried in the folk cemeteries in the first place.[48]

If the majority of infants were not normally included in the folk cemetery it could be argued that this deliberate exclusion of many infants from the 'normal' burial space indicates that there was some concept of 'difference' between the dead infants and other age groups. How the majority of dead infants were disposed of is still not known. A proportion were certainly buried in and around settlements, though this was not an area reserved exclusively for infants, as adult burials, though relatively uncommon, do occur in settlement locations too.[49] Some differentiation in the disposal of dead infants occurred within the cemeteries, too, since both cremated infants and inhumed infants were more likely to be given double or multiple burial than other age groups, though again, this was not a hard and fast rule: adults were buried with other adults too, and a proportion of infants were buried in single graves.[50] The furnished inhumation and cremation

[47] Crawford, 'Children, Death and the Afterlife', p. 83; Richards, *The Significance of Form and Decoration of Anglo-Saxon Cremation Urns*; Buckberry, 'Missing, Presumed Buried?'.

[48] Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 75.

[49] Crawford, 'The Disposal of Dead Infants'.

[50] Crawford, 'The Disposal of Dead Infants'.

cemeteries of the fifth to seventh centuries give the impression that no rigid age thresholds for infants and younger children existed.[51] The burial ritual showed no clear pattern, for example, in grave goods associated with infant or young juvenile burials. The youngest children tended to have been given very few archaeologically recoverable grave goods and rarely had the gender-related grave goods which dominated the burial ritual after the age of puberty. This said, it sometimes happened that some infants were given 'adult' grave goods or were given a relatively rich burial. On the whole, the burials of children in general, and younger children in particular, seem to have been more open to individual and personal input than burials of older children and adults, and while there was an overall difference between 'adult' and 'child' burials in terms of numbers and types of grave goods, there does not appear to have been any strict application of age grading. Earlier Anglo-Saxon cemeteries also show little evidence for zoning of infant burials. Small clusters of infant burials do occur on some excavated sites, but the general picture shows males and females, adults and children, distributed evenly throughout the sites.[52] As far as the surviving evidence allows, there was no identifiable age-related mortuary ritual associated with the very youngest children, or one which recognized a transition from baby to toddler or from toddler to younger child.[53] If there was any differentiation between the treatment of infants and other age groups in the earlier furnished cemeteries, it was that the normal 'rules' of burial, as far as Anglo-Saxon furnished cemeteries may be said to have had rules, were very much less rigidly applied to the burial of the youngest children. What criteria led to the inclusion or exclusion of infants in the community cemetery, and what led some infants to be given their own grave, while others were deposited in a grave with other bodies, is not known.

There has been much discussion over the extent to which Final Phase cemeteries represent the last gasp of pagan burial ritual or the earliest expression of Christian burial before unfurnished church burial became the norm from the eighth century onwards.[54] In terms of infant burials, it would not appear that Final Phase cemeteries brought about any significant change in the numbers of dead infants disposed of in the community cemeteries, or in the ritual accorded to them. A good case is the site at Butler's Field, Lechlade (Gloucestershire), a

[51] Crawford, 'When do Anglo-Saxon Children Count?'; Stoodley, 'From the Cradle to the Grave'.

[52] Crawford, 'The Disposal of Dead Infants'.

[53] Crawford, 'Children, Grave Goods and Social Status'.

[54] Boddington, 'Models of Burial, Settlement and Worship'; Geake, *The Use of Grave Goods*; Hadley, 'Burial Practices in the Northern Danelaw'; Crawford, 'Votive Deposition'.

large cemetery of at least 219 inhumations dating from the mid-fifth century to the late seventh or early eighth century, which, with forty-four burials of children under the age of six at the time of death, has a relatively high proportion of juvenile burials for a cemetery of this period, though only twenty-five of these burials were of children under the age of three.[55] The burials at this site fall into two phases, representing the earlier, pagan period and the Final Phase. Neither phase shows any sign of zoning by age or gender. Only one of the five newborn babies could be phased: this infant belonged to Phase 2 and was inhumed in the same grave as an adult female with a workbox and associated items. The cemetery also included the burials of two in utero babies, both of which appear to have been given independent burials, though one of these (burial 95) was disturbed and redeposited in the grave of an adult female; unfortunately, no date could be assigned to either of these burials. Additionally, the fill of the pre-Anglo-Saxon ditches around the cemetery site included the fragmentary remains of some Anglo-Saxon human skeletal material. One ditch section included redeposited material from a disturbed infant burial, but the number of bones allows the tentative suggestion that this is a burial within a ditch, but associated with the cemetery.[56] If Final Phase burials were of the first Christian converts, before the introduction of church burial became the norm, then the archaeological evidence would suggest that the introduction of baptism had no marked impact on the inclusion of infants for burial in the folk cemeteries. Not only did the ritual for children remain conservative, there is some anecdotal evidence that the burials of infants and older children were being given a more old-fashioned and 'pagan' burial at a time when adult ritual was in a period of transition. The Final Phase cemeteries at Marina Drive, Dunstable (Bedfordshire), Didcot (Oxfordshire), and Winnall II (Hampshire), for example, all include children's burials which are notably abnormal, either because the children were given exceptionally rich burial in terms of grave goods or because unusual and possible amuletic artefacts were placed in the grave.[57]

Excavations of the earliest Anglo-Saxon churchyards show much higher proportions of infant burials than were found in the earlier furnished cemeteries, suggesting that the place of infants in the mortuary ritual in England had undergone a significant change with the conversion, comparable to the 'conquest' of

[55] Boyle and others, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Butler's Field*.

[56] Boyle and others, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Butler's Field*, p. 43.

[57] Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 79–81.

the communal cemetery by infants on the Continent.[58] At the late Anglo-Saxon church cemetery at Raunds Furnells (Northamptonshire), for example, infant burials comprised 18 per cent of the total mortuary population, which is still by no means a 'normal' population, but is closer to expected archaeological retrieval rates of infants.[59] Although there may be a relatively good level of recovery of infant bones from later church cemeteries, burials on these sites were more likely to be intercutting, with newer burials dug into earlier graves, so that relatively few late Anglo-Saxon infants are excavated in situ. As noted above, because infant bones are so tiny, infants at all types of sites, including graveyards, are frequently not identified at the time of excavation, if at all.[60] Details of their grave structures, burial location, and other patterns of deposition are inevitably lost.

Where there is surviving evidence, it would appear that burial structures and the spatial location of infants, as of adults, showed some variety, perhaps associated with a need to express social status through body positioning.[61] At Worcester Cathedral Chapter House cemetery, for example, at least five infants were buried in coffins, and a further six infants had stones associated with their burials, as did a number of the adult interments.[62]

A number of different treatments characterize the burials of infants within Anglo-Saxon Christian burial contexts. One of the most obvious characteristics of infant burials at post-conversion burial grounds, where there was an associated church building, was that while infant burials may have occurred across the site, there tended to be identifiable zoning of burials. Unlike Continental counterparts, Anglo-Saxon church cemeteries excavated to date do not show clustering of infant and child burials at the periphery, but they do follow continental practice in clustering infants close to the exterior walls of the church; so-called 'eavesdrip' burials.[63] At Winwick (Cheshire), for example, a large unfurnished Anglo-Saxon cemetery included an area with 'a higher proportion of child burials in the north', where there was also the only possible evidence for a church on

[58] Buckberry, 'Missing, Presumed Buried?'; Alexandre-Bidon and Lett, *Les Enfants au Moyen Âge*, p. 56; Alduc-Le Bagousse, 'Comportements à l'égard des nouveau-nés'.

[59] Boddington, *Raunds Furnells*, p. 55.

[60] As a result of excavations at the lay Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Worcester Cathedral Chapter House, for example, the majority of infant bones were identified at the post-excavation stage (Chris Guy, Worcester Cathedral Archaeologist, personal communication, 2005).

[61] Hadley, 'Burial Practices in the Northern Danelaw', p. 199.

[62] Chris Guy, personal communication, 2005.

[63] Alexandre-Bidon and Lett, *Les Enfants au Moyen Âge*, p. 57.

the site, which survives as the trace of a small structure.[64] At Rivenhall (Essex), infants and young children were buried close to the church walls.[65] Evidence from Raunds Furnells (Northamptonshire), where phasing of the site was possible, suggests that the placing of infants in an 'eavesdrip' position, though common in later Anglo-Saxon churchyards, was not a standard practice at all times. At Raunds Furnells, 'eavesdrip' burials were only introduced after some restructuring of the church and churchyard in the tenth and eleventh centuries, which also coincided with the burial of an infant within the body of the church. This date coincides with the date at which Richard Morris has identified Anglo-Saxon baptismal fonts making an appearance, at the same time as parish churches and parish burial grounds were becoming widespread, and in this context it is worth noting that the clustering of 'eavesdrip' infant burials to the north of the church in France has been linked to the presence of baptismal fonts, usually located in the north-west part of the church.[66] At about this time across early medieval Europe, a similar caesura in the burial ritual was taking place: the restructuring of the church and burial space at Raunds Furnells in the tenth and eleventh centuries has been identified as almost exactly parallelling the developments at the site of Rigny (Indre-et-Loire) in France, where the phase of burials concentrated around the church there was interpreted as marking the passage from 'an extended burial zone to a funerary space polarized by the church'.[67] The archaeological evidence at Raunds Furnells appears to highlight the central role of infant burial in this new phase of burial patterning in Anglo-Saxon England.

Evidence from excavations at St Bride's church, London, offers a strikingly similar picture to Raunds Furnells. The first excavations at St Bride's took place between 1952 and 1960, and the site was re-excavated between 1992 and 1995.[68] The surviving records from the earlier phase of excavation are not easy to interpret, but it would appear that a group of burials, including an infant, were located within an Anglo-Saxon building. The burials were located between the apse and the square-ended chancel. These burials, according to the site report, 'could be seen as prestigious interments set around [a] well or cistern' in the centre of the building.[69] The archaeological evidence demonstrated a change in the function

[64] Freke, Holgate, and Thacker, 'Excavations at Winwick'.

[65] Rodwell and Rodwell, *Rivenhall*.

[66] Morris, 'Baptismal Places'; Alexandre-Bidon and Lett, *Les Enfants au Moyen Âge*, p. 58.

[67] Zadora-Rio and Galinié, 'Les Fouilles du site de Rigny'.

[68] Milne, *St Bride's Church, London*.

[69] Milne, *St Bride's Church, London*, p. 101.

of the church from proprietary to parish church, with the church taking on a baptismal and burial role for the local community. The font fragment found during the early phase of excavations might conceivably have been associated with this change.

At a number of later Anglo-Saxon sites, infant burials have been found which might reasonably be described as 'special' burials because of their location within the church. At Raunds Furnells (Northamptonshire), all the burials were within the churchyard, except for the single infant whose grave was cut into the foundations of the former east wall of the pre-chancel church.[70] The grave was apparently marked by a post at the foot. It was not possible to tell whether the grave was contemporary with the construction of the chancel (i.e. a foundation burial), or whether it post-dated the chancel. A similar, single inhumation of a child was found within the church, under the western tower crossing, at Barton-on-Humber, which has also been identified as having baptismal functions.[71] Similarly, two infant burials were made within the chapel during the Anglo-Saxon phase of the church at the Brough of Deerness, Orkney.[72] It has to be noted that not all isolated or chancel burials were infants: an infant aged between twelve and eighteen months was buried in the chancel of the second church at St Nicholas Shambles, London, for example, but this was one of five other burials, all the rest of which were adults.[73] However, only the infant's burial included charcoal, although charcoal burial is more normally associated with high-status adults.[74] At St Bride's church, London, the only infant burial was also associated with adult burials, but again, particular care had been lavished on the grave. The burial was not recovered in ideal archaeological circumstances, but it would appear to have been one of the five high-status graves excavated in 1952–54 from within the chancel of the church. The infant within was 'almost certainly' stillborn, having been six to seven months in utero at the time of death, yet it had been given the relatively lavish funerary treatment of a small stone coffin covered with red tiles.[75]

All these infants had in common a high-status burial within the church. In the case of the St Nicholas and St Bride's infants, their presence amongst a group of

[70] Boddington, *Raunds Furnells*, p. 21.

[71] Rodwell and Rodwell, 'St Peter's Church'.

[72] Morris and Emery, 'The Chapel and Enclosure on the Brough of Deerness, Orkney'.

[73] White, *Skeletal Remains*, p. 11.

[74] Hadley, 'Burial Practices in the Northern Danelaw', p. 208; White, *Skeletal Remains*, p. 18.

[75] Sklar, 'Burial of a Premature Baby'.

adults might support an argument that the babies were given this burial location because they belonged to high-status families, rather than because of their age at death, but the single infant burials at Raunds Furnells and Barton-on-Humber suggest that these were 'special' infants. A comparison with Bede's description of the burial of King Eadwine's babies, where their high-status church burial is ascribed to both their royal blood and their innocence, is tempting.[76] The isolated intramural burial of the infant at Raunds Furnells might represent the burial of a newly born, baptized baby, whose 'special' body acted as a focus for the remodelling of the church, but the pre-term baby from St Bride's almost certainly cannot have been baptized. The documentary sources discussed earlier would suggest that this infant, rather than having special status through death at the point of baptism, should never have been buried in or near a church at all. The presence of stillborn babies in Anglo-Saxon churches and churchyards might be explained in a number of ways, but certainly demonstrates that those responsible for burying the babies felt unable to comply with the cruel burial regulations for unbaptized children; an epitaph from sixth-century France records the burial of an unbaptized child whose parents nevertheless insisted that he was 'innocent, saved from the stain of sin', and no doubt many Anglo-Saxon parents felt the same way about their own lost children.[77]

In addition to burial in the community cemetery, some infants and older children in the post-conversion burial ritual appear to have been given separate burial areas, away from the main adult burial ground. At the monastic site of Whithorn, Dumfries, and Galloway, which was in use throughout the early medieval period, an area close to the site of a church was dedicated to infant and juvenile burial. During the eighth to ninth centuries (the phase of Anglo-Saxon Northumbrian settlement), the monastic site was redeveloped, and a series of regularly planned buildings was constructed. This development included a church, a burial chapel into which four adult burials were inserted, and a burial ground abutting the east wall of the burial chapel containing the graves of about fifty-six children.[78] No infants were found within the burial chapel itself, and the 'children's graveyard' was only in use for a very short period of about thirty to forty years. Even so, burial within the children's graveyard can be divided into two phases. The first phase, lasting only ten to fifteen years, was exclusively for perinatal and infant burials, including the burial of four infants up to two months premature at the time of

[76] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. by Colgrave and Mynors, v. 20.

[77] Alexandre-Bidon and Lett, *Les Enfants au Moyen Âge*, p. 53.

[78] Hill, *Whithorn and St Ninian*, p. 557.

burial, who cannot have been baptized and should not, according to canon law, have been included in a consecrated burial ground.[79] The second phase of burial included older children. The children's graveyard was sealed by the deposition of a bundle of bones of a young adult female, whose partially decomposed body was wrapped up in a cloth and deposited over the children's graves. She had suffered from tuberculosis. Finally, ashes from the cremation (a method of disposing of bodies more normally associated with the pagan period) of at least four adults were spread over the area. Another feature of the graveyard was that, while the majority of the adult burials at Whithorn showed a population with good levels of health, the children's skeletons exhibited striking levels of chronic problems such as *cribra orbitalia* and severe anaemia, both associated with chronic sickness or dietary deficiency. Again, in contrast to the adult burials, while the majority of the adults were given normal west–east extended alignment, the children's burials showed much more variation.[80]

The evidence from Anglian Whithorn poses a number of problems of interpretation. The presence of preterm infants in the cemetery suggests that such babies were considered fit for burial within a church context, though it seems unlikely that all of them, particularly the stillborn, can have been baptized. On the other hand, the infant burials were very clearly segregated from all other burials, and the infant and child mortuary population was very different to the adult mortuary population, in terms of both pathology and burial layout. Finally, deliberate sealing of the cemetery with the translated remains of a woman who had been chronically ill and probably disabled, if not disfigured, during her life raises new possibilities about the 'special' nature of the space in which these infants and children were buried.

To date, Whithorn offers the only excavated example of an Anglo-Saxon 'children's cemetery', but the findings at Whithorn are echoed, to some extent, by the evidence from the monastic/productive site of Flixborough, North Lincolnshire.[81] The settlement at Flixborouth was in use throughout the Middle and Late Saxon periods. Between the late seventh and mid-eighth centuries, the whole of the excavated area was inhabited, with five timber-framed buildings and a large boundary ditch. Two buildings had stone-lined 'soakaways'. In the early to mid-eighth century, one building was replaced by an 'exceptional' structure, building 1a, internally divided with a hearth at one end. This building contained

[79] Hill, *Whithorn and St Ninian*, p. 558.

[80] Hill, *Whithorn and St Ninian*, p. 559.

[81] Loveluck, 'Wealth, Waste and Conspicuous Consumption'.

four burials placed along its walls on an east–west alignment. Two further burials were located outside the walls of this building to the south and south-east. All the burials were of children aged between three and twelve years old, except one adult female, aged twenty to thirty years at the time of death who had been buried with a perinatal foetus at her feet.[82] All the children showed signs of *cribra orbitalia*, and the female has been diagnosed as having suffered from tuberculosis. The small inhumation cemetery associated with the site contained no burials under the ages of seventeen (though this cemetery was not fully excavated).

The site of Flixborough was initially interpreted as an undocumented monastic centre on the basis of the similarity between the high-status artefacts recovered from Flixborough and those from documented monastic sites, but recent reassessment of the site argues that, while it was certainly a complex high-status site showing changing patterns of consumption and production through the middle to late Saxon periods, there are no clear grounds for describing Flixborough as a monastic centre at any point in its evolution.[83] The burials within and beside building 1a might indicate that this was the mortuary chapel of an elite household separating itself from the main cemetery.[84] Alternatively, it may be worth reconsidering building 1a at Flixborough in the light of the sketchy surviving evidence for the baptismal ritual and baptismal places discussed at the beginning of this article. Given that all the burials associated with this building are of children, with the exception of the woman with a foetus, it is hard to argue that this is a 'family' burial place. The presence of a stone soakaway at the site, even though apparently associated with an earlier building underlying the foundations of building 1a, may hint that this may have been specifically a place for the burial of children because it may have had other ritual, and perhaps baptismal, functions. Comparison of the Flixborough burial evidence with the evidence from Whithorn offers obvious parallels: the segregation of children from other burials; the burial location in close association with a building (though at Flixborough the children are buried within the building, as well as extramurally); the poor health of the juvenile mortuary population during life; and the presence of an adult female suffering from chronic illness, who was visibly disabled during life.

Some association between dead infants and adults who were suffering from chronic disfiguring or disabling illnesses have been identified at other Anglo-

[82] Loveluck, 'Wealth, Waste and Conspicuous Consumption', p. 86.

[83] Whitwell, 'Flixborough', p. 247; Yorke, 'Lindsay: The Lost Kingdom Found?', p. 146; Loveluck, 'Wealth, Waste and Conspicuous Consumption', pp. 120–21.

[84] Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*, p. 133; Loveluck, 'Wealth, Waste and Conspicuous Consumption', pp. 85–86.

Saxon mortuary sites, including pre-Christian contexts.[85] Females with disabling illnesses, but buried with high-status grave goods, were associated with infant burials at furnished cemetery sites at Edix Hill (Cambridgeshire), Beckford (Hereford and Worcestershire), and Lechlade (Gloucestershire), for example.[86] The evidence from Flixborough and Whithorn suggests that similar cultural perceptions may have continued into the later cemeteries associated with churches.

It is clear from the archaeological evidence that relatively higher numbers of babies, many of whom cannot ever have been baptized, were included in church and community cemeteries in the later Anglo-Saxon period. According to the documentary evidence, however, the archaeological evidence should also provide examples of unbaptized babies, and women who died in childbirth, buried away from the communal cemetery. The examples of infant and juvenile burial cited above, where the children are associated with, but separate from, the adult area of burial, might represent a strategy for expressing the difference between Christian and excluded burials, while still respecting the excluded dead by close association with the community burial area.

Evidence for more drastic and disrespectful treatment of dead babies is relatively rare for the later Anglo-Saxon period. In the earlier Anglo-Saxon period, infant bones have been recovered from a few settlement sites, usually associated with sunken-featured buildings and ditches.[87] In the later Anglo-Saxon period, infant bones associated with domestic structures are almost unknown, though again, the difficulties associated with identifying and recovering infant remains in the archaeological process may play a part in this absence. A very few infants have been found in settlement pits. Two pits from the eighth-century proto-urban site of Hamwic (Hampshire) also contained the remains of infants. Information on the deposition of one infant is scanty, but the bones from the other pit suggested that the baby was 'no more than a few weeks old, perhaps newly born'.[88] It was not clear, on the basis of the archaeological evidence, whether the baby had been disposed of directly into the pit or redeposited from elsewhere. The bone was scattered on the bottom of the pit with soil which may have been cess. The treatment of at least one of these infants seems to have been disrespectful, non-normative, and private, but a case of infant deposition at Marlowe Car Park, Canterbury (Kent) is not so clear-cut. The bones from two infants were found during excava-

[85] Crawford, 'The Disposal of Dead Infants', and Lee, 'Forever Young'.

[86] Crawford, 'The Disposal of Dead Infants'.

[87] Crawford, 'The Disposal of Dead Infants'.

[88] Andrews, *Excavations at Hamwic*, II, 204; Morton, *Excavations at Hamwic*, I.

tion.[89] The surviving bones from the first infant indicated 'a new-born baby not more than two months old; may be a full-term stillborn child'.[90] It was supposed that the infant burial may have been disturbed by the digging of a robber trench, dating to the late seventh century. The backfill of this trench also contained the head of an adult femur, and on the evidence of other bones dating to a later phase of the site's use in the same location, it is possible, though by no means certain, that the infant burial might have been part of a larger burial ground, possibly associated with a church, though all interpretations were, of necessity, tentative. The second infant was identified as 'a stillborn or very young baby' and was found in the secondary backfill of a fifth- to mid-sixth-century structure.[91]

Post-conversion Anglo-Saxon cemeteries raise interesting problems of interpretation. In the pre-Christian early furnished inhumation cemeteries, infant burial seems to have fallen into two categories: those who were buried in cemeteries and the large majority who were not. Of those selected for burial in the furnished inhumation and cremation cemeteries a variety of burial treatment was used. During the 'Final Phase' or 'conversion period' of burial it would appear that, although the introduction of Christianity had had a discernable impact on the burial ritual, and although it is arguable that the majority of burials at this period were Christian, the infant burial ritual remained conservative. The majority of infants were still being disposed either elsewhere or in a different, and non-archaeologically recoverable, way, and treatment of infant burials within the adult cemetery continued to be individual and non-normative.

With the introduction of churchyard burial we would anticipate a significant shift in attitudes towards infant burial, in that now the 'normal' burial location for the majority of infants should have been in the churchyard, with the adults. Baptism, a new public ritual of initiation which gave the infant immediate access to adult spiritual status from a very early age, meant that a significant cultural break with the past had taken place in terms of the concept of dead infants. From the seventh to the ninth century, however, the evidence suggests that attitudes towards the death of an infant remained conservative and that pre-Christian methods of disposing of dead infants persisted. The burial patterns at Flixborough and Whithorn suggest that a proportion of dead infants and older children were being given burial close to, but still not with, the rest of the population, while, as

[89] Garrard and Blockley, 'The Human Bones'.

[90] Garrard and Blockley, 'The Human Bones'.

[91] Garrard and Blockley, 'The Human Bones'.

phase I at Raunds Furnells shows, some infants were buried in the 'normal' graveyard, with the adult males and females.

The evidence from the churchyard at Raunds Furnells also suggests that it was not until the tenth century that a marked shift in attitude towards the burial location of dead infants took place. At around this time there was a major reorganization of the relationship between churches and burial across Anglo-Saxon England, to the extent that, certainly by the beginning of the eleventh century, a fundamental function of the emergent local churches was baptism.[92] It is from this later date that the zones of infant burial, closely associated with the church building, appeared at Raunds Furnells.

In addition to infants buried amongst adults and 'eavesdrip' infant burials, there is a further category of post-conversion infant burials: those infants who are buried within the church. Interpretation of these burials remains elusive. Are they making statements about family status? Founder burials? Or are there other explanations? The evidence discussed in this article suggests a special status due to death immediately after baptism cannot be the explanation for the status of these infants, because some of them almost certainly died before they could have been baptized, so that family status and age at death played a more important part in the decision to bury infants within the church.

One aspect of infant burial seems to have remained consistent from the pagan to the Christian periods and that is the association of disabled or chronically sick people with the children. Infant burials at Edix Hill, Whithorn, and Flixborough, amongst others, offer evidence that infant graves carried connotations as special places for the chronically sick, into the middle and later Anglo-Saxon periods, though whether as privileged or stigmatized locations is not clear.[93]

Though the introduction of Christianity had an identifiable and progressive impact on the burial of infants — into segregated infant areas and into the communal church cemetery — the presence of stillborn and foetal skeletons in both locations indicates that baptism did not in itself determine infant burial patterns. The implication of the documentary sources — that unbaptized babies should be buried at a distance from the church and the community, with non-normative burial procedures (such as a stake through the heart!) — is not substantiated by the current archaeological evidence.

[92] Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, p. 459.

[93] Crawford, 'The Disposal of Dead Infants'.

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Wanton Boys in Middle English Texts and the Christ Child in Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, MS Z822 N81

Mary Dzon

We are not accustomed to speaking of children as 'wanton', but Shakespeare and a host of Middle English writers described children using this word. In *King Lear*, boys who kill flies for sport are called 'wanton' and presented as an earthly figuration of cruel gods who cause humans needless suffering.[1] The word is also used of a child in *Romeo and Juliet*: when the heroine sends her lover away in the morning, she compares herself to a 'wanton' boy who teases a bird by tugging at a string attached to it. In this case, the activity seems rather harmless. Juliet circumscribes Romeo's freedom by the expectation of his return:

> 'Tis almost morning, I would have thee gone—
> And yet no farther than a wanton's bird,
> That lets it hop a little from his hand,
> Like a poor prisoner in his twisted gyves,
> And with a silken thread plucks it back again,
> So loving-jealous of his liberty.[2]

The wanton child to whom Juliet compares herself is a boy, while the fly-killers in *King Lear* are also male.[3] This suggests that, in Shakespeare's view, boys were

[1] 'As flies to wanton boys are we to th' gods, | They kill us for their sport', *King Lear*, IV. 1. 36–37, in Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. by Evans, p. 1329.

[2] *Romeo and Juliet*, II. 2. 176–81, in Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. by Evans, p. 1115.

[3] In her note to *Romeo and Juliet*, II. 1. 223, Jill L. Levenson says that 'In this gentle analogy, *wanton's* probably refers to a playful or spoiled child (OED *sb*. I, 2a)', but suggests that the word

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Figure 1. Francesco d'Antonio, 'Madonna del cardellino', Viterbo, Museo Civico, fifteenth century. Reproduced with kind permission of the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali.

more likely than girls to derive pleasure at the expense of another living creature. Anglophone readers of this essay will undoubtedly recall the traditional nursery rhyme that asks what little girls and little boys are made of; while girls embody sweetness ('Sugar and spice | And all that's nice'), boys seem more adventuresome, associated as they are with 'Frogs and snails | And puppy-dogs' tails'.[4] Medieval texts that speak of boys and girls also reveal different assumptions about the two genders. As we shall see, boys were generally thought to be naughty and unruly, while girls were seen as more orderly and demure.

The different ways in which Shakespeare portrays children in the two passages mentioned above imply that 'wanton' children are not always cruel; they are sometimes playful in a teasing way, intending no serious harm. In the premodern world, children often had birds as pets and played with them.[5] Thus, it should not surprise us that late medieval images of the Virgin and Child often portray Jesus holding a bird. In some of these images, the Christ Child is like the wanton boy in Juliet's analogy who toys with a bird on a string.[6] A particularly striking example is the fifteenth-century fresco 'Madonna del cardellino' by Francesco d'Antonio ('Il Balletta'), now in the Museo Civico in Viterbo (Figure 1). The Child seems enthralled in his game. Yet Jesus was not the only medieval child, so to speak, who treated a bird as his plaything. In his *Life* of Saint Anselm of Canterbury (d. 1109), Eadmer recounts how the saint once witnessed a boy teasing a bird by tying a string around its leg and repeatedly tugging at it when it tried to fly.[7] Anselm offers a moral based upon this incident: the devil, he says, plays (*jocatur*) with human beings in a like manner by ensnaring them in vices.[8] From a medieval

here is gender specific: 'As [G. W.] Williams and others have argued, *wanton's* could easily mean *boy's*' (Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. by Levenson, p. 218).

[4] Opie and Opie, *Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes*, no. 75, pp. 116–17.

[5] Aasgaard, *The Childhood of Jesus*, p. 58.

[6] See Friedmann, *The Symbolic Goldfinch*, esp. pp. 115–17, for images of Jesus holding a string tied to a bird. See also Shorr, *The Christ Child in Devotional Images*, pp. 172–79 and passim. For a fifteenth-century English example, see London, British Library, MS Stowe 39, fol. 10^{r}, viewable at <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMINBig.ASP?size=big&IllID=8932>.

[7] Eadmer of Canterbury, *The Life of St. Anselm*, ed. and trans. by Southern, pp. 90–91. James A. Schultz notes that one of the pastimes typical of children in medieval German literature is 'tormenting birds that leave their nests too soon': Schultz, *The Knowledge of Childhood*, p. 51. These literary references suggest that medieval children did in fact toy with birds.

[8] In his *Asceticon* (Discourse 8), the fifth-century Abba Isaiah of Scetis similarly draws a spiritual lesson from a boy's toying with a bird: 'I am like a little sparrow whose leg is held by

Christian perspective, both the devil and Christ wished to exercise control over human souls, as if they were birds tethered by a string. While the devil would shackle a soul through vice, Jesus would hold a favoured soul in his captivity.[9] Christ was also thought to have interacted with actual birds during his lifetime. In legends about Jesus's childhood that originated in the Early Christian period and were transmitted over the course of the Middle Ages, the Christ Child fashions clay birds when playing by the riverside.[10] Yet unlike the Child in the painting, who merely frustrates the bird at the end of his string, the apocryphal Jesus orders the birds he brought into being to fly forth and, on a number of occasions, actually causes the deaths of his playmates. We need to attend carefully, then, to the ways in which the word 'wanton' is applied to Jesus in late medieval redactions of these legends. The divine Child may bear a closer resemblance to *Lear*'s 'wanton boys' than we might at first expect.

In the first part of this essay I provide a semantic overview of the word 'wanton' in Middle English texts that speak of children. I then focus on a particular Middle English poem found in a manuscript dating to the fifteenth century: Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, MS Z822 N81.[11] This poem contains an apocryphal account of the lives of Mary and Christ up to the beginning of Jesus's public ministry (as it is presented in the canonical gospels). In the Middle English poem, the girl Mary is presented as sweet and pious, while the boy Jesus is considered a troublemaker by many of the people around him.[12] At one point, a neighbour who is displeased by Christ's disruptive behaviour calls him a 'wanton' child. The same word is applied to the child Jesus in an earlier text, the *Cursor Mundi*, a long Middle English versification of the Bible replete with legendary material,

a child; if he relaxes his hold, it immediately flies upward, thinking it has been set free. If the child holds it down, again it is brought down. This is how I see myself. I say this because one should not be carefree until one's last breath' (Abba Isaiah of Scetis, *Ascetic Discourses*, trans. by Chryssavgis and Penkett, p. 87).

[9] On the symbolism of the tethered bird, see further Ross, 'Symbol and Structure in the *Secunda Pastorum*', pp. 188–89. Birds have traditionally signified the human soul. Cf. Psalm 123. 7.

[10] Dzon, 'Jesus and the Birds'.

[11] J. Lawrence Mitchell dates the manuscript to 'at least the mid-fifteenth century' on the basis of 'paleographical and watermark evidence': Mitchell, 'A "Northern Homilies Cycle" Manuscript', p. 322. The manuscript's previous shelfmark was Phillipps 8122.

[12] On the portrayal of the Christ Child as a 'problem child' in a different Middle English manuscript and in an Old French text, see, respectively, Couch, 'Misbehaving God'; and Vitz, 'The Apocryphal and the Biblical'.

composed around the beginning of the fourteenth century.[13] The *Oxford English Dictionary* cites a passage from the latter poem, which occurs in the section dealing with Christ's childhood, as the earliest English instance of the application of the adjective 'wanton' to children who are 'naughty, [and] unruly'.[14] In this scene, some Jewish parents complain to Joseph and Mary that Jesus has been the cause of the death of one of his playmates: 'youre sone wantoun & wylde, | With his cursyng hath slayn oure childe'.[15] This episode is a retelling of an incident from the apocryphal Latin 'Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew'. Like the Middle English poem on which I will focus in this essay, the *Cursor Mundi* provides a translation in English verse of this apocryphal infancy gospel, but within the wider context of an all-encompassing versification of salvation history.

My goal in this essay is to discuss the senses in which the child Jesus in late medieval English texts based upon the apocrypha (particularly the poem about Christ's early life in MS Z822 N81) may be considered 'wanton'. I will also offer an explanation as to why the Christian authors and readers of these texts apparently countenanced a depiction which, at first glance, seems disrespectful of Christ's sacred divinity. My comparison of the 'wanton' Christ Child with saintly boys and girls, such as the Virgin Mary, suggests that while the biographers of the saints likely wanted them to serve as role models for other children, the purveyors of the apocrypha for the most part intended the Christ Child to be regarded with wonder and awe rather than imitated.[16] Furthermore, whereas child saints are hardly childlike, the boy Jesus is; he develops on a personal level, gradually putting aside his wild behaviour, while they do not. This is because hagiographers felt no need to prove that the saints, whom they wished to celebrate, were truly human; instead, they sought to demonstrate that certain children were chosen by God and endowed with supernatural grace, indeed, from the very beginning of their

[13] For a brief overview of this poem, see Morey, *Book and Verse*, pp. 99–107.

[14] Simpson and Weiner, *Oxford English Dictionary*, XIX, 881–82, sense 1a.

[15] *The Southern Version of Cursor Mundi*, ed. by Fowler, p. 91, ll. 11953–54. On Jesus's vengeful behaviour towards the Jews around him, see Birenbaum, 'Virtuous Vengeance', chap. 2.

[16] Caroline Walker Bynum notes that, according to Bernard of Clairvaux, one of the most powerful causes of *admiratio* ('wonder') is the union of divinity and humanity in Christ. Although saints' *vitae* often aim at producing in their medieval audiences the sensation of wonder at the extraordinariness of saints, they also encourage, at the same time, the imitation of the saints' virtues, if only to the degree attainable by a 'regular' person. See Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity*, chap. 1, pp. 51–53. First published as Bynum, 'Wonder', pp. 10–12. As Kleinberg, *Flesh Made Word*, pp. 49–50, states: 'The saint was not merely a conduit of supernatural energy but a moral paragon. A pedagogical exchange ought to exist between him and the believer.'

lives. In contrast, Middle English writers who transmitted and adapted centuries-old apocryphal legends about the boy Jesus sought to underscore his humanity, evidenced by his behaviour as a real (that is, 'wanton') child. At the same time, they reminded their audience of Christ's divinity by recounting his precocious displays of wisdom and power, which often had the effect of disturbing those around him. In addition to pointing out that Jesus was both human and divine, Middle English poets exploited the paradox of a playful and potent child-God.

'Wanton' Children

The word 'wanton', which Shakespeare and other early modern writers use of children,[17] emerged in the English language as it was making its transition from Old to Middle English. To be more precise: the adjective 'wanton' is derived from the past participle of the Old English verb *teon*, meaning 'to draw, to educate, to bring up'. The negative prefix 'wan' (which is similar to the modern prefix *un*) was affixed to its past participle *getogen* (after the removal of the prefix *ge*). Thus the word *wantowen* literally means 'unrestrained, uneducated, not taken in hand by a master'. The philologist W. W. Skeat first offers the rather neutral adjectives 'playful, sportive, unrestrained' as synonyms of 'wanton'. Yet he comments, in addition, that Old English *ungetogen* (the distant relative of *wanton*) is cognate with German *ungezogen*, which means 'ill-bred, unmannerly, rude, [and] uncivil', words which obviously have a negative connotation. 'The true sense' of the Middle English word, he says, is 'unrestrained, uneducated, not taken in hand by a master'. The meaning 'licentious', clearly negative, is derived from it.[18] Although the word 'wanton' strictly speaking does not appear in thirteenth-century anchoritic texts, written at the time when Middle English was coming into its own, they contain a few examples of early and related forms of that word. For example, the *Sawles Warde*, an allegorical text that compares the soul to a household, warns

[17] The mid-sixteenth-century interlude *Nice Wanton* recounts the misfortune that results when a mother fails to discipline her two 'wanton' children. The boy becomes a thief, the girl a prostitute; they both suffer untimely deaths. For an edition, see *The Tudor Interludes*, ed. by Tennenhouse, pp. 65–125. For a study, see Mills, 'Education, Education, Education!'.

[18] Skeat, *An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, p. 695. The first definition of 'wanton' that C. T. Onions gives (Onions and others, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, p. 991) is similarly 'undisciplined'. Bosworth and Toller cite only two instances of Old English *ungetogen*; in these Ælfric uses the word to describe the uneducated fishermen chosen by Christ to be his disciples. See Bosworth and Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, p. 1115; and Ælfric, *Catholic Homilies*, ed. by Clemoes, p. 508, ll. 24–25 and 37–39.

that if the wife (Will) is not governed by the paterfamilias (Reason), she will become 'fulitohe' ('unruly') and cause the servant-senses to be 'untohene' (i.e. 'undisciplined').[19] Children, like women, were thought to lack reason and to be naturally ruled by the lower human faculties, particularly appetite; they were thus in need of the guidance of rational adults and the discipline they provided.

In Middle English texts, children are spoken of as 'wanton' in both neutral ('playful, sportive') and derogatory ('unrestrained, uneducated, not taken in hand by a master') senses, in accordance with Skeat's explanation of this word. Children may be described as 'wanton' in the first sense because — as medieval adults recognized — they relish the activity of play. The author of the Scottish (or northern English) poem *Ratis Raving* describes young children as always wishing 'with flouris for to Jap [jest] and playe'.[20] They spend their time making things, such as swords and dolls, out of ordinary objects. Apostrophizing the children whom he describes, the poet says: 'And be syk vantone vyrk weill | Thi dayly dawark is done ilk deill' (Your days are entirely consumed with such wanton work). 'Wanton work' is an ironic way of saying 'child's play', a harmless, if unproductive, activity, except when it mirrors the activities of grown-ups, in which case it prepares children for the adult world.[21] Although the age of childhood lacks 'gud Judgment', limited as it is to the activities of sensation and growth (which characterize trees and beasts), it 'is lycht [frivolous] and Innocent'. Hence the poet concludes: 'I bles it nocht as best, | Na yit wary it nocht as verst' (nor condemn it as the worst).[22]

'Playful' is not the only meaning of 'wanton'. In Middle English texts, the adjective is used for children who are particularly in need of being disciplined

[19] See *Sawles Warde*, ed. and trans. by Millett and Wogan-Browne, esp. p. 87.

[20] *Ratis Raving*, ed. by Lumby, p. 57, l. 1129.

[21] A negative attitude towards play as idle activity is suggested by a remark of Blessed Umiliana Cerchi: when she finds a beautiful child playing in her room, she asks him, whom she assumes to be an angel (initially, it seems, unaware that he is Jesus), 'Don't you know how to do anything but play?' ('numquid praeter ludere aliud facere novisti?'); Vito of Cortona, *Vita de b. Aemiliana*, chap. 5, pp. 396–97. Humiliana perhaps poses this question rhetorically in jest, implying that it is fitting for a child-like angel simply to amuse himself. Play was also viewed at times as useful, as can be seen in Gerald of Wales's autobiography: in his childhood, he built churches and monasteries out of sand, while his brothers made castles and towns. These 'puerilia praeludia' foreshadowed the boys' different vocations. See Gerald of Wales, *De rebus a se gestis*, ed. by Brewer, chap. 1, p. 21.

[22] *Ratis Raving*, ed. by Lumby, p. 58, ll. 1140–47. Sense (8a) 'frivolous' for the adjective 'light' in the MED seems to be the equivalent of Latin *levis* as used of children. On this Latin word, see Cochelin, 'Besides the Book', pp. 24–25, and 32–33, nn. 11 and 14.

by parents or schoolmasters. The anonymous author of the treatise *Chastising of Goddes Chyldren* sets up an analogy whereby wanton children represent souls who are beneficially disciplined by God: 'if the childe wex wanton, she [its mother] betith him, first with a litel rodde, and the strenger he wexith, the sharper rode she taketh, and sharpli leitht on, [...] and all is for loue'.[23]

The word 'wanton' in the sense of 'needing to be civilized' occasionally appears in late medieval English conduct literature, a genre aimed at inculcating behaviour considered proper to children and youths who must learn how to function within society.[24] One instructional poem seeks to dissuade boys from wanton behaviour by arguing that learning good manners and their school lessons will enable them to succeed in life:

> The chyld that hath hys wyll alway
> Shal thryve late, y thei wel say,
> And ther-for euery gode mannys chyld
> That is to wanton and to wyld,
> Lerne wel this lesson for sertayne,
> That thou may be the beter man.
>
> [The child that has his will alway(s),
> Shall thrive late, I thee well say.
> And therefore, every good man's child,
> That is too wanton and too wild,
> Learn well this lesson certainly,
> That thou the better man may be.][25]

The 'wanton and wyld' behaviour that the poet wants his reader to avoid includes throwing objects at animals, making faces at people, and climbing over a wall or house to obtain some fruit, birds, or a ball, as well as other mischief.[26] Rather

[23] *The Chastising of God's Children*, ed. by Bazire and Colledge, p. 113, ll. 17–20.

[24] For a survey of this literature, see Nicholls, *The Matter of Courtesy*, pt 1. Also useful is the collection *Medieval Conduct Literature*, ed. and trans. by Johnston. Relevant to the study of medieval children's upbringing is the literature of medieval pastoral care, which provides many instances of clerics advising parents to discipline their children and chiding them for failure to do so; see Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England*, pp. 461–68.

[25] 'Symon's Lesson of Wisdom for all Maner of Chyldryn', ed. by Furnivall, p. 381, ll. 7–12. I cite the modernization provided in *The Babees' Book*, ed. by Rickert, pp. 122–26 (p. 122).

[26] *Early English Meals and Manners*, ed. by Furnivall, p. 382. *The Babees' Book*, ed. by Rickert, p. 123. Recall that the *Cursor Mundi* used the phrase 'wanton and wild' of the Christ Child. In her study of late medieval English childhood, Barbara A. Hanawalt mentions the alliterative pair 'wild and wanton', noting that Londoners employed it to contrast youth with

than argue abstractly, as does the anchoritic text *Sawles Warde* (obviously with a different readership in mind), that reason ought to rule over desire, the poet here appeals to a boy's self-interest, instilling in him the ambition to become a bishop. Implying that 'wanton' children are uneducated (which is what the word means literally), he encourages the reader to study hard, not for the love of knowledge itself, but rather so that he may quickly assume a position of authority:

> And, chyld, ryse, by tyme and go to scole,
> And fare not as a Wanton fole,
> And lerne as fast as þou may and can,
> For owre byschop is an old man,
> And þer-for þou most lerne fast
> Iff þou wolt be bysshop when he is past.
>
> [And child, rise betimes and go to school,
> And fare not as a wanton fool;
> And learn as fast as thou may or can,
> For our bishop is an old man,
> And therefore thou must learn fast,
> If thou wilt be bishop when he is passed.][27]

The speaker may possibly be alluding to the feast of the 'Boy Bishop'. By allowing schoolboys to act like clerics temporarily (from the feast of Saint Nicholas to that of the Holy Innocents), medieval adults gave them a taste of the authority they would enjoy at a later stage of life, thus reinforcing the conventional, day-to-day order among the age groups within society.[28]

Another example of conduct literature that makes use of the word 'wanton' to speak disapprovingly of boys whose crude manners are in need of reform is John Lydgate's popular translation of the instructional poem 'Stans puer ad mensam'.[29]

adulthood: Hanawalt, *Growing up in Medieval London*, pp. 5–6. Most of the examples of 'wanton' behaviour she cites refer to adolescents, not children; see pp. 179, 181, and 183.

[27] *Early English Meals and Manners*, ed. by Furnivall, p. 383, ll. 77–82. *The Babees' Book*, ed. by Rickert, p. 125.

[28] The boy bishop travelled around with other schoolboys dressed like clerics, giving blessings and accepting gifts. In some places, he delivered a sermon to his fellow pupils. See Orme, *Medieval Children*, pp. 188–89; Salisbury, 'Spare the Rod and Spoil the Child'; and Shahar, 'The Boy Bishop's Feast'.

[29] Lydgate, 'Stans Puer ad Mensam', ed. by Furnivall. For a translation, see *The Babees' Book*, ed. by Rickert, pp. 26–31. See also the translation in Orme, *Fleas, Flies, and Friars*, pp. 41–44. Derek Pearsall notes the poem's popularity in *John Lydgate*, p. 219. Servus Gieben, 'Robert Grosseteste and Medieval Courtesy-Books', says the poem is an English translation of a Latin

Seeking to eradicate the insolent behaviour of the boy to whom he speaks,[30] the fatherly narrator of Lydgate's poem recommends that, when he has entered the service of a lord,[31] he

> [...] take good hede bi wisdome & resoun
> that bi no wantowne laughinge thou do noon offence
> To-fore thi souereyne while he is in presence.
>
> ['And take good heed of wisdom and renown,
> That by no wanton laughing thou do no offence,
> Before thy sovereign, while he is in (your) presence.'][32]

Probably the most obnoxious child in early English literature is the boy called Wanton in the morality play *Mundus et Infans*, who is in the second stage of the life cycle.[33] Wanton not only delights in play, but revels in destruction and disobedience. Admitting his disrespect for his parents, Wanton boasts that

> If fader or mother wyll me smyte
> I wyll wrynge with my lyppe
> And lyghtly from hym make a skyppe
> And call my dame a shrewe.[34] [mother]

poem on courtesy by Robert Grosseteste, bishop of Lincoln in the thirteenth century, although Rigg, *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature*, p. 361 n. 13, considers this attribution doubtful. The poem was included by S. Harrison Thomson among Grosseteste's 'Miscellaneous Works', in Thomson, *The Writings of Robert Grosseteste*, pp. 149–50.

[30] The *Promptorium Parvulorum*, the first English–Latin dictionary, defines 'wantowe' ('wantown') as 'insolens, dissolutus': Galfridus, *Promptorium parvulorum*, ed. by Way, p. 515.

[31] On the social contexts of conduct literature, see Bailey, 'In Service and at Home'. As Bailey notes, 'It has been fairly well established that young people between the ages of twelve to fourteen and sometimes as young as seven or eight [...] were sent to live and work in new environments. In elite houses this helped to reinforce social connections and facilitated the learning of courtesy, a process of which these poems are a tangible reminder' (p. 31).

[32] Lydgate, 'Stans Puer ad Mensam', ed. by Furnivall, p. 276, ll. 19–21. *The Babees' Book*, ed. by Rickert, p. 27. The parallel advice found in the Latin poem edited by Gieben reads as follows: 'Nec coram domino debes monstrare cachinnas' (Gieben, 'Robert Grosseteste and Medieval Courtesy-Books', p. 57). 'Cachinnas', which is presumably a substitution for 'cacchinus', may be translated as 'loud laughter'; for *cacchinus*, see Latham, *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, III, 234. Laughter was usually frowned upon in medieval religious circles, though the ability to laugh was considered a human attribute. See Le Goff, 'Laughter in the Middle Ages'.

[33] In the hebdomadal scheme of the life cycle, this encompasses ages seven to fourteen. See, among others, Sears, *The Ages of Man*, passim, and Isabelle Cochelin's introduction to this volume.

[34] *The Worlde and The Chylde*, ed. by Davidson and Happé, p. 38, ll. 88–91.

Willfully malicious, Wanton is very different from the carefree child who plays with flowers in the poem *Ratis Raving*. Like the boys in *King Lear* who kill living creatures for sport, Wanton 'can well gelde [mutilate] a snayle | And catche a cowe by the tayle'.[35] The fact that he has the name Wanton shows that the word can be used to refer to the naughty, even sinful, deeds of children. Wanton unabashedly confesses that 'euery day | Whan I to scole shall take the waye | Some good mannes gardyn I wyll assaye, | Perys and plommes to pluck'.[36] The play's original audience would likely have recalled the young Augustine who, according to his autobiography, stole pears for the love of sin itself.[37] Whereas Wanton lacks shame, in his 'Testament' John Lydgate presents himself as contrite for the sins of his childhood. Like Wanton, he committed petty thefts and took pleasure in disrespecting other people: 'My lust was al to scorne folk and iape [mock] [...] to Skoffe and mowe [make faces] lyke a wantoun Ape'.[38] The word 'wanton' is also used recollectively of past misbehaviour in Langland's *Piers Plowman*, in which Ymaginatif tries to stir the conscience of the forty-five-year-old dreamer-poet so that he may repent

> [...] of thi wilde wantownesse tho thow yong were, [when]
> To amende it in thi myddel age, lest myght the faille [you lack power]
> In thyn olde elde [...].[39] [age]

In other words, he is urged to pray and do penance now (as he approaches old age), not later.

[35] *The Worlde and The Chylde*, ed. by Davidson and Happé, p. 39, ll. 100–01. Wanton probably removes snails from their shells. Nicholas Orme comments on this passage and sources that speak of boys' searching for birds' nests, saying: 'In an age when life was cheap [...] and mutilation a legal punishment, the teasing and chasing of birds and animals must have been a common practice' (Orme, 'The Culture of Children in Medieval England', p. 65).

[36] *The Worlde and The Chylde*, ed. by Davidson and Happé, p. 39, ll. 107–10.

[37] Augustine, *Confessiones*, ed. by Verheijen, bk II, chaps 4 and 6, pp. 21–23. Though Augustine was older (age sixteen) than the fictional Wanton when he committed the theft, the parallel still holds, since both *personae* revelled in sin itself.

[38] Lydgate, 'Testament', ed. by McCracken, p. 353, ll. 642–44. Noting the popularity of Lydgate's 'Testament' in the fifteenth century, Pearsall says that it contains 'an encyclopedia [...] of childish indiscretions, designed to touch everyone somewhere': Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, p. 295. For Lydgate's description of his childhood misbehaviour, see Lydgate, 'Testament', ed. by McCracken, section 3, pp. 351–57. Like the boy Wanton, the young Lydgate 'Ran in-too gardeynes, apples ther I stall', p. 353, l. 638. On Lydgate's perception of the whole life cycle, see Karen Smyth's essay in this volume.

[39] Langland, *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, ed. by Schmidt, Passus XII. 6–8, p. 189.

In cases such as this in which 'youth' indicates the whole first age of life within a tripartite scheme of the life cycle,[40] wanton behaviour may refer to lasciviousness. Prepubescent children, however, were usually thought to be wanton in the sense of 'unruly', rather than 'lascivious'. The *Decretals* of Gregory IX, read in conjunction with its gloss, state that children aged seven are often guilty of theft, lying, and perjury, but not sexual sins, such as those that are committed by adolescents.[41] Constitution 21 ('Omnis utriusque sexus') of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 had earlier decreed that Christians, including children who had reached 'ad annos discretionis', were to confess their sins once a year.[42] The view of some scholars — erroneous in my opinion — that medieval children were typically considered guilty of sexual sins is founded, in part, upon an overemphasis upon monastic penitential literature, which catalogues the range of sins that a person

[40] J. A. Burrow explains that the passage from Langland just cited alludes to Gregory the Great's interpretation of Luke's parable about the three *vigiliae* of the night (Luke 12. 37–40), according to which the three night watches represent the three ages of man: Burrow, *The Ages of Man*, pp. 69–70. See further Burrow, 'Langland *Nel Mezzo del Cammin*'.

[41] 'Pueris grandiusculis peccatum nolunt attribuere quidam, nisi ab annis xiiii cum pubescere coeperint. Quod merito crederemus, si nulla essent peccata nisi quae membris genitalibus admittuntur. Quis vero audeat affirmare, furta, mendacia, & periuria non esse peccata? At his plena est puerilis aetas, quamuis in eis non ita vt in maioribus punienda videantur': *Liber extra*, 5. 23. 1, in *Corpus juris canonici*, II, col. 1760. The glossator on this text (*Glos*. ad X 5. 23. 1 ad v. *Gradiusculis*) says that the adjective *grandiusculis* ('pretty well grown up', according to Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*) as applied to *pueris* means 'doli capacibus, videlicet vii annorum, tales enim & mentiri & verum dicere & confiteri & negare possunt'. These children have not yet reached *pubertas*, 'quae in annos xiiii solet euenire' (*Glos*. ad X 5. 23. 1 ad v. *Pubescere*).

[42] *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, trans. by Tanner, I, 245. While the expressions 'aetas discretionis' and 'doli capax' (the latter found in the gloss about children in the *Decretals*) seem to be used interchangeably, the former may refer to a later age. John Burgh says that the age of discretion is when children 'sint prope etatam adultam, id est, cum sint decem annorum vel vndecim et apparant in eis signa discretionis': Burgh, *Pupilla oculi*, chap. 25 (fol. 25^{r}). When read in conjunction with each other, the *Pupilla oculi* and 'Omnis utriusque sexus' seem to imply that prepubescent children were to confess their sins (which, according to the *Decretals*, were usually not sexual in nature). Referring to these same documents, Nicholas Orme holds that 'children were not required to confess': Orme, 'Children and the Church in Medieval England', pp. 573–74. A comment by Gabriel Le Bras is helpful in reconciling these different interpretations. After stating that confirmation is administered to those who have attained the age of reason, he remarks: 'C'est aussi la *discretio* qui rend nécessaire la pénitence et justifie la réception de l'eucharistie [...]. Cependant, la *discretio plena* ne s'acquiert qu'au temps de la puberté' (Le Bras, *Institutions ecclésiastiques de la chrétienté médiévale*, p. 137). See further Lea, *A History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences*, I, 400–04.

might commit.[43] While such material sheds lights on monastic communities that regulated the lives of oblates, it is not reflective of lay experience within later medieval society, which did not produce confessional aids for lay children and, in any case, lacked a regular system of confession. This is not to deny that some medieval children engaged in sexual acts regarded as sinful or to claim that adults were oblivious to such behaviour. To take one example: the fourteenth-century treatise on confession *Memoriale presbiterorum* mentions the possibility that a 'child, capable of deceit', who is 'close to puberty', might sin 'on account of the fall of the flesh', because 'natural heat burns in youth'.[44] That children were often seen as sexually pure, however, is indicated by Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*, which connects the word 'pueri' (children) with the adjective 'purus' ('pure'), an association difficult for moderns to accept given the predominance of Freudian psychology within modern culture and conventional theories of child development.[45]

Modern scholars' assumption regarding children's 'uncontrolled sexuality' also stems from a misinterpretation of the Latin word *lascivia*, which is frequently used in reference to children in hagiographical literature and other texts.[46] In his *Etymologiae*, for example, Isidore remarks that 'children have no insight into their actions due to playfulness and childishness (*per lasciviam et infantiam*)'.[47] In the

[43] On children in penitential literature, see, among others, Meens, 'Children and Confession in the Early Middle Ages', esp. pp. 61–64; and Frantzen, 'Where the Boys Are'.

[44] 'puer [...] doli capax, proximus pubertati', might sin 'circa carnis lapsum' because 'calores naturales [...] in iuvene exardescunt': *Memoriale presbiterorum*, ed. by Haren, pp. 162–63. For a listing of boys' sins in the *Penitential of Cummean*, many of which are sexual in nature, see *The Irish Penitentials*, ed. by Bieler, pp. 126–29.

[45] Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, ed. by Lindsay, XI. 2. 3. For a translation, see Isidore of Seville, *The Etymologies*, trans. by Barney and others, p. 241. For Freud's view of children, see Freud, 'Infantile Sexuality'.

[46] The phrase comes from an essay by Janet Nelson, in which she translates *lascivia* first as 'uncontrolled sexuality' (when rendering a passage concerned with Guthlac's childhood in Felix's *vita* of the saint) and then as 'uncontrolled behaviour' (when treating Bede's vignette of Cuthbert's childhood); see Nelson, 'Parents, Children, and the Church', p. 84. For the text, see *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, ed. and trans. by Colgrave, pp. 78–79. Colgrave translates the phrase in question as 'the impudence of children'. Charles W. Jones renders it as 'the sportiveness of boys': *Saints' Lives and Chronicles in Early England*, ed. and trans. by Jones, p. 132.

[47] Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, ed. by Lindsay, XI. 2. 27. Isidore of Seville, *The Etymologies*, trans. by Barney and others, p. 243. For an example of the adjective 'lascivus' used to denote mischievous boys in a classical text, see Horace, *Satires*, bk I, satire 3, in Horace, *Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica*, trans. by Fairclough, p. 42, l. 134. Another example occurs in the *Metamorphoses*: Ovid has Apollo address Cupid as 'lascive puer'; see Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. and trans. by Miller, I, bk I, p. 34, l. 456.

vitae of the saints, the child destined for sainthood, so to speak, is often described as a *puer-senex*; abnormally mature, such a child disdains the typical behaviour of his or her peers. In this context, childhood *lascivia* should be read as the Latin equivalent of the Middle English word 'wantonness'.[48] Donald Weinstein and Rudolph M. Bell probably have this particular Latin word in mind (and perhaps the word *levitas*) when they remark: 'If the "old child" is a hagiographic convention it is nonetheless revealing, for it suggests by contrast [...] the attributes of most children, frivolity and sensuality.'[49] One should be careful, though, about assuming that *lascivia* always refers to sensuality, especially sensuality of a sexual nature. While it is true that medieval medical and natural philosophical authors sometimes emphasize how children are dominated by bodily processes and impulses, they usually call attention to children's desire for food, which is necessary for their growth. As the thirteenth-century Franciscan encyclopedist Bartholomaeus Anglicus noted, 'for grete and strong hete he desirith moche mete [...]. Thei coueiten and desiren to ete and drinke alwey. Vnnethe they risen out of here bed and axen mete anon' (On account of great and strong (internal) heat, he (a child) desires much food [...]. They crave and desire to eat and drink at all times. Hardly having risen from their bed, they ask for food at once).[50] In contrast

[48] On the trope of the *puer-senex*, see Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, pp. 98–101; Burrow, *The Ages of Man*, passim; Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, pp. 15–16, and 196–99; Carp, 'Puer Senex'; Goodich, 'Childhood and Adolescence', pp. 287–88; Giannarelli, 'Infanzia e santità', pp. 33–39; and Wasyliw, 'The Pious Infant'. Gregory the Great's *Dialogues* (bk II) provides a classic example of a *puer-senex*: he says of Benedict that as a boy he had 'the heart of an old man. In his behaviour he went far beyond his age, never giving himself up to foolish pleasure': translated in Burrow, *The Ages of Man*, p. 98.

[49] Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society*, p. 29. More specifically, 'The old child avoids the company of other children, preferring solitude. He does not play games, engage in horseplay, or tell or listen to dirty stories. He does not indulge in what hagiographers refer to as the common sensuality of ordinary children (masturbation?). The old child studies hard, prays regularly, and attends church gladly. It is hard to escape the conclusion that medieval people knew childhood as a stage distinct from adulthood, distinct even from adolescence, as a time of self-indulgence and relatively harmless frivolity.'

[50] Citing here the fourteenth-century translation by Trevisa, *On the Properties of Things*, ed. by Seymour, I, 300–01. For the Latin, see Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De rerum proprietatibus*, VI. 5, pp. 239–40. The *Ayenbite of Inwyt* similarly underscores children's love of food when it compares a gluttonous adult to a child who always has bread in hand; Michel of Northgate, *Ayenbite of Inwyt*, ed. by Morris and Gradon, p. 52. Guillaume de Conches accounts for children's inability to exercise the faculty of reason by referring to their constant eating and digestion: 'Cum enim illa aetas sit calida et humida, statim cibum digerit et appetit, unde frequenti influxione indiget et effluxione, spissusque fumus generatur, qui ascendens, cerebrum, in quo vis est discernendi et intelligendi, turbat' (Guillaume de Conches, *Philosophia mundi*, ed. by

to ordinary children who continually wish to eat, saints in their infancy often abstained from their nurses' breast.[51] Along similar lines, when Saint Anthony the Hermit was a child, he 'never felt disgust, as that age is accustomed, for his own food, by desiring a variety of delicate victuals; nor did he strive after the delights of more agreeable food. Content only with those foods which he was given, he asked for nothing more'. Besides not being finicky about or overindulgent in food, the young boy Anthony 'often went to church with his parents, and avoided both infantile games (*infantum lasciviae*) and boyish thoughtlessness'.[52] The piety of Anthony is highlighted by being set against the 'wantonness' of children, a term that, in this text, principally concerns their playfulness and possibly also their attitude towards food, but certainly not their sexuality, which is not mentioned.[53]

In a discussion of children's wantonness it is worth noting that in late medieval art, the infant Jesus is often shown naked or scantily clothed. He is sometimes portrayed playing with a hobbyhorse (or another toy) with his genitals exposed, due to his coat being opened at the bottom or his wearing no clothes at all.

Migne, col. 99). Cf. Guillaume de Conches, *Glosae super Platonem*, ed. by Jeauneau, p. 234. On children's physicality, see further Dzon, 'Boys Will Be Boys'.

[51] The classic example is baby Nicholas, who, in his adulthood, became Bishop of Myra in the fourth century. His cult was widespread in the later Middle Ages. See Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, pp. 385–86. The *Legenda aurea* (chap. 3) relates that Nicholas stood up in his bath on the day of his birth and 'took the breast only once on Wednesdays and Fridays. As a youth he avoided the dissolute pleasures of his peers (*iuuenum deuitans lasciuias*), preferring to spend time in churches': Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. by Ryan, I, 21. For the Latin, see Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, ed. by Maggioni, I, 38–39. For an early fifteenth-century depiction of baby Nicholas standing in a bathing basin, see Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, ed. by Levasti, I, 59.

[52] Saint Athanastius wrote the *vita* of the saint in Greek in the fourth century; soon thereafter Evagrius translated it into Latin. Here I cite the translation in Burrow, *The Ages of Man*, p. 97. For the Latin, see Evagrius, *Vita Beati Antonii abbatis*, ed. by Migne, col. 127. The passage about food, not translated by Burrow, reads as follows: 'non suis, ut solet illa aetas, pro variis et delicatis cibis unquam taedio fuit; non escae mollioris blandimenta sectatus est; his solum quae dabantur contentus, nihil amplius requisivit'.

[53] Other *vitae* in which the word *lascivia* is used of children include the following: Willibald, *Vita Bonifatii*, ed. by Levison, p. 8; Renald of Vézelay, 'Vies de saint Hugues de Cluny par l'abbé Renaud de Vézelay', ed. by Huygens, p. 40; Turgot of Durham, *Vita S. Margaretae Scotorum Reginae*, ed. by Hinde, p. 240; Bernard of Clairvaux, *Vita Sancti Malachiae Episcopi*, ed. by Leclercq and Rochais, I.1, p. 310; Adam of Eynsham, *Magna vita Sancti Hugonis*, ed. and trans. by Douie and Farmer, I, 5–6; and *De B. Juliana virgine priorissa Montis-Cornelii apud Leodium*, p. 443. In his letter to Laeta (no. 105), Jerome says he hopes that the 'aetas lasciua puerorum' would be far away from her daughter. See Jerome, *Lettres*, ed. and trans. by Labourt, letter 107, pp. 144–48 (pp. 147–48).

A fifteenth-century woodcut from Swabia (now in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Départment des Estampes et Photographie) portrays the Christ Child wearing an open coat, straddling a hobbyhorse, and standing beside Saint Dorothy (Figure 2).[54] According to legend, a child carrying flowers and apples in a basket appeared to Dorothy shortly before her martyrdom.[55] Hieronymous Bosch's 'Christ Child with Whirligig and Walking Frame' (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum; *c*. 1500) renders what appears to be a naked infant Jesus holding a windmill toy and pushing a walker.[56] A naked Christ Child is often common in late medieval statuary; Christians not only looked upon him, but acted upon him as well, as did the Italian women whom Margery Kempe encountered on her return trip from the Holy Land. When a woman who had an effigy of the baby Jesus in a chest took it out, 'thei wold puttyn schirtys therupon and kyssyn it'.[57]

While these images of a naked Jesus may catch the attention of modern viewers, they should not be considered attempts to represent Christ as a 'wanton' boy in an exhibitionistic sense. By portraying Christ's uncovered genitalia, artists may have wished to call attention to his humanity, as Leo Steinberg has suggested with regard to a number of late medieval and Renaissance texts dealing with Christ's circumcision and images that seem to call attention to his private parts.[58] In certain

[54] Danièle Alexandre-Bidon and Pierre Riché also reproduce this image, as well as a miniature depicting a naked infant straddling a hobbyhorse and holding a toy sword, objects similar to those employed by knights; see Alexandre-Bidon and Richè, *L'Enfance au Moyen Âge*, pp. 114 and 161. In his controversial book, Leo Steinberg likewise calls attention to an image of Jesus with open coat and hobbyhorse: Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ*, p. 43, fig. 56.

[55] Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, ed. by Graesse, chap. 210, p. 911. The Child does not identify himself, although his purple garment covered with stars makes clear who he is. See further, Parshall and others, *Origins of European Printmaking*, no. 27, pp. 128–30.

[56] Gibson, 'Bosch's Boy with a Whirligig'. There is some debate about whether the infant is the Christ Child or an 'Everyman figure': Silver, *Hieronymus Bosch*, p. 192.

[57] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Windeatt, bk 1, chap. 30, p. 177. The woman probably brought the effigy back from Bethlehem. That two Franciscan friars accompanied her is no coincidence. Franciscans were known to have carved such statues in the Holy Land; an example is the Bambino Santo in Santa Maria di Ara Coeli in Rome. See van Hulst, 'La storia della divozione a Gesù Bambino'. On Christ Child statues, see further Klapisch-Zuber, 'Holy Dolls'; Van Os, *The Art of Devotion in the Late Middle Ages*, trans. by Hoyle, pp. 98–103; and Hale, 'Rocking the Cradle'.

[58] Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ*. Caroline Walker Bynum points out that it is not Christ's penis as an embodiment of his sexuality that represents his humanity, but the fact that he suffered in that particular member at the circumcision and in his entire body at the crucifixion: Bynum, 'The Body of Christ in the Later Middle Ages'. On the Child's nudity, see also Hull, 'The Sex of the Savior in Renaissance Art'. Millard Meiss suggests that the fourteenth-

Figure 2. 'Saint Dorothy and the Christ Child', woodcut, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fifteenth century. Reproduced with kind permission of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

late medieval depictions of the Christ Child, his nakedness seems to symbolize his vulnerability,[59] but in images of the boy Jesus playing it seems to connote his uninhibited lack of shame, resulting from his complete innocence (cf. Genesis 3. 10). Some medieval adults attributed such a lack of inhibition to children in general, a view somewhat at odds with Christian belief that children were tainted by original

century innovation of portraying a nude Christ Child was 'in large part inspired by a desire for the visualization of Christ as a baby', but also links it to 'a broader concern with the unclothed body': Meiss, *French Painting in the Time of Jean de Berry*, I, 125.

[59] A point made by Elina Gertsman in reference to late medieval images of the so-called 'Child of Sorrows', the Christ Child surrounded by the instruments of the Passion. See Gertsman, 'Signs of Death'.

Figure 3. Cuthbert playing with other boys, Oxford, University College, MS 165, fol. 8r, early twelfth century. Reproduced with kind permission of the Master and Fellows of University College, Oxford.

sin.[60] Not only were medieval children (supposedly) not embarrassed to appear nude or scantily clothed, but, practically speaking, it made sense for them to do so. For one thing, it allowed them to engage in play unencumbered by clothing.[61] When clothed, medieval children typically wore loose and opened tunics.[62] While

[60] According to Bartholomaeus Anglicus, children 'schameth no3t to be sen naked and bare': Trevisa, *On the Properties of Things*, ed. by Seymour, p. 300. Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De rerum proprietatibus*, VI. 5, p. 239.

[61] Orme notes that children often stripped themselves for play; Orme, *Medieval Children*, p. 75.

[62] On children's clothing, see Orme, *Medieval Children*, pp. 73–75; Alexandre-Bidon and

the boy Jesus may have been portrayed naked or only partially clothed because he was like other children, portrayals of Cupid (and later of a putto) as a naked child may also have been an influence.[63] In my view, unless compelling evidence can be marshaled to the contrary, depictions of the boy Jesus or of other children naked should not be interpreted as representations with sexual overtones.

Before moving on to consider the depiction of the Christ Child in MS Z822 N81, I would like to discuss an early medieval anecdote that attributes *lascivia* to children and also mentions their nakedness. As we have seen, hagiographical authors usually contrasted the behaviour of saints during their childhood with that of other children. One medieval saint who, rather unconventionally, at first behaved like a normal child in the sense of relishing play is the Anglo-Saxon Cuthbert (d. 687), who became a monk and later Bishop of Lindisfarne. We will gain a useful point of reference for the examination of the legendary Christ Child in the latter part of this essay by paying attention to the characteristics of Cuthbert and his playmates. In his prose *vita* of Saint Cuthbert, Bede relates a supernatural experience that occurred during the saint's boyhood and led to a sort of religious conversion, or at least a conversion of manners. Cuthbert did not at first seem to be saint-material,

> for up to the eighth year of his age [...] he could devote his mind to nothing but the games and wantonness (*lascivia*) of children [...]. As was natural at his age, he loved to be in the company of children and delighted to join in their play. And because he was agile by nature and quick-witted, he very often used to prevail over his rivals at play, so that sometimes, when the rest were tired, he, being still untired, would triumphantly look round to see whether any of them were willing to contend with him again. Whether they were jumping or running or wrestling or exercising their limbs in any other way, he used to boast that he had beaten all who were his equals in age and even some who were older. For when he was a child he understood as a child, he thought as a child; but after he became a man, he put away childish things entirely (1 Corinthians 13. 11).[64]

Richè, *L'Enfance au Moyen Âge*, pp. 65–68; Alexandre-Bidon, 'Du drapeau à la cotte'; Pipponier and Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, pp. 103–04; and, for the early modern period, Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, trans. by Baldick, chap. 10.

[63] On the likening of the Christ Child to Cupid, see Newman, 'Love's Arrows', esp. pp. 267–68, and 272–73, figs 2 and 5. For an overview of putti, see Demsey, *Inventing the Renaissance Putto*.

[64] Bede, *Vita S. Cuthberti*, ed. and trans. by Colgrave, chap. 1, pp. 154–57 (Latin and English on facing pages). Bede also mentions this episode, with an attitude of disapproval of Cuthbert's play, in his earlier metrical *vita* of the saint; see Bede, *Vita sancti Cuthberti*, ed. by Jaager, section 1, esp. p. 63, l. 63. In his treatment of Cuthbert in the *Ecclesiastical History*, which postdates the prose *vita* by about a decade, Bede simply says: 'From his earliest years [Cuthbert]

There are a few details in this passage that deserve special attention. First, Bede uses the word 'lascivia' to describe Cuthbert's playfulness.[65] Second, Cuthbert's childish exuberance is characterized by bodily contortions and a spirit of competitiveness.[66] Third, Bede offers an explanation for Cuthbert's wantonness when he quotes Saint Paul to the effect that boys will be boys. After describing Cuthbert's play, which is seen as natural, though not as admirable,[67] Bede recounts how a mysterious little boy appears to Cuthbert and tells him to give up his boyish wantonness (*parvuli lascivia*). Such behaviour, he says, is not fitting for one who is to become a bishop and priest. Bede, of course, is interested in showing how Cuthbert abruptly turned aside from childishness, which was at odds with his ecclesiastical vocation. Cuthbert takes the heaven-sent message to heart: 'he forthwith gave up the idle games and, returning home, he began from that time to be steadier and more mature in mind'.[68] That Cuthbert was not far from the Lord before experiencing this visitation is suggested by the comparison that Bede draws between the playful Cuthbert and the boy Samuel. After Samuel had already begun to minister 'before the face of the Lord, being a child girded with a linen ephod' (1 Kings 2. 18), he was called by the Lord one night but did not at first realize what was happening, since he 'did not yet know the Lord' (1 Kings 3. 7).[69] Bede applies this verse to Cuthbert before the heaven-sent boy appears to him.[70]

had always longed for life under a Rule, and it was as a young monk that he assumed both the name and habit of a monk'; Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. by Colgrave and Mynors, bk. IV, chap. 27, p. 431.

[65] On medieval children's play, see Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, chap. 10; and Orme, *Medieval Children*, chap. 5.

[66] On clerics' negative attitude towards acrobats, see Dzon, 'Boys Will Be Boys', pp. 197–98.

[67] Note that there is no mention here of the healthy benefits derived from children's play, as Avicenna later pointed out, for example (Avicenna, *Liber canonis medicinae*, trans. by Gerard of Cremona, liber I, fen 3, doctrina 3, chap. 4). The healthiness of play for boys is also mentioned by Philippe de Novarre, *Les Quatres Ages de l'homme*, ed. by de Eréville (pp. 13–14) and touched upon by Guibert of Nogent, in his autobiography (Guibert of Nogent, *A Monk's Confession*, trans. by Archambault, bk I, chap. 5, p. 16).

[68] Bede, *Vita S. Cuthberti*, ed. and trans. by Colgrave, chap. 1, pp. 158–59. Bede's following comment that 'the wantonness of a child' (*paruuli lasciuia*) was 'checked through a child' suggests that by *lasciuia* he means 'playfulness'. While the boy Cuthbert's turn away from playfulness is abrupt, his spiritual development over the course of his life is shown, in Bede's prose *vita*, to be gradual, according to Newlands, 'Bede and Images of Saint Cuthbert', esp. pp. 82–86.

[69] Here and throughout the essay I cite the Douai-Rheims translation of the Bible.

[70] 'it could be testified of him as of the blessed Samuel: "Now" Cuthbert "did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him." This was spoken as a prelude to the praise of his boyhood, for, when he became older, he was to know the Lord perfectly':

An illustration of Cuthbert engaged in play is found in an early twelfth-century manuscript containing Bede's prose *vita* of Cuthbert and other material relating to the saint: Oxford, University College, MS 165, on fol. 8^{r} (Figure 3).[71] The boys, who, in size, look more like adolescents than young children, are wearing short tunics and playing a ball game.[72] That one of the boys is turned upside down in pursuit of a ball while the others are clustered together in a variety of disorderly postures suggests that the artist perceived the boys' activity as undignified, if not necessarily as reprehensible.[73] Cuthbert's participation in play is also mentioned in the anonymous *vita* of Cuthbert, which Bede used as a source. Here the boys are said to play in the nude: the youths 'indulge[d] in a variety of games and tricks; some of them stood naked, with their heads turned down unnaturally towards the ground, their legs stretched out and their feet lifted up and pointing skywards'.[74] While this may strike a modern reader as immodest, if not lewd, it should be recalled that medieval boys often stripped themselves for games.

Legends about the Childhoods of Jesus, Mary, and Other Saints

The Christ Child of the apocryphal legends is like the boy Cuthbert before his conversion in that he loves to play. These legends date back to the second century and were still in circulation in the later Middle Ages, having been translated into the various vernacular languages by that time; in addition, they were still transmitted in Latin.[75] Here I would like to focus on one particular text, a Middle

Bede, *Vita S. Cuthberti*, ed. and trans. by Colgrave, chap. 1, pp. 154–57 (Latin and English on facing pages). Samuel was emblematic of the child oblate in medieval monasticism and, according to Burrow, a model for the Christian *puer-senex*. See de Jong, *In Samuel's Image*; and Burrow, *The Ages of Man*, p. 96.

[71] On this manuscript, see Baker, 'Medieval Illustrations of Bede's Life of St. Cuthbert', pp. 18–21; Lawrence-Mathers, *Manuscripts in Northumbria*, chap. 4; and Alexander, *Medieval Illuminators*, p. 85 and passim.

[72] Teresa McLean says that Cuthbert and the other boys are playing a game that is an 'amalgam' that mixes 'camp, hurling and all-in wrestling'; McLean, *The English at Play*, pp. 2–3.

[73] On the association, in medieval art, of upside-down figures (such as the fallen angels and the idols in Egypt) with evil, see Casey, 'The Apocryphal Infancy of Christ', pp. 59–71.

[74] *Anonymous Life of St Cuthbert*, ed. and trans. by Colgrave, pp. 64–65.

[75] For a listing of some of these vernacular versions, see Hall, 'The Miracle of the Lengthened Beam', pp. 119–22. For a survey of vernacular texts that transmit apocryphal infancy legends about Mary and Jesus, see Reinsch, *Die Pseudo-Evangelien von Jesu und Maria's Kindheit*. For late medieval French versions of these apocryphal legends (Old French and Anglo-Norman), see the editions by Maureen Boulton: *The Old French Évangile de l'enfance*, and *Les Enfaunces de Jesu Crist*.

English translation in verse of the so-called 'Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew' that survives in a fifteenth-century English manuscript. There are four other extant manuscripts that relate Christ's apocryphal childhood in Middle English verse, not counting the manuscripts that contain the *Cursor Mundi*, which, as noted above, has a section devoted to Jesus's childhood.[76] None of the texts in the other manuscripts are as long as, or — in my opinion — as interesting as, the English Pseudo-Matthew in MS Z822 N81.[77]

A few words about the late antique origins of the so-called apocryphal infancy legends are in order. In general, apocryphal texts relating to the New Testament arose as a way of satisfying people's curiosity by filling in the gaps left by the canonical texts of the Bible, lacunae, that is, regarding Jesus's life, death, and Resurrection, and the beginnings of the Christian church.[78] A text known as the *Protoevangelium Jacobi*, which is thought to have been composed in Greek in the second century, recounts the series of events that led up to the birth of Christ, providing a condensed *Life* of the Virgin Mary.[79] The text breaks off shortly after

[76] These poems are found in the following manuscripts: BL, Add. MS 31042 ('London Thornton Manuscript'; s. xv^{med}); BL, MS Harley 2399 (s. xv); BL, MS Harley 3954 (s. xiv or s. xv^{in}); and Oxford, Bodl. Libr., MS Laud Misc. 108 (s. xiii/xiv). Carl Horstmann edited all four texts: the first in 'Nachträge zu den Legenden'; the second and third in *Sammlung Altenglischer Legenden*, pp. 111–23; and the fourth in *Altenglische Legenden*, pp. 1–61. The first three texts are closely related. The fourth text includes many more episodes than the other three. Another text worth mentioning is an elaboration of Luke 2. 41–52 influenced by the apocrypha, which appears in the Vernon Manuscript (Oxford, Bodl. Libr., MS Eng. poet.a.1), a well-known compilation of Middle English devotional writings: 'Dispute of the Boy Jesus and the Jew Doctors', in *The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS*, ed. by Furnivall, pp. 479–84. On these texts, see Morey, *Book and Verse*, pp. 203–05 and 294–95. (He does not mention the apocryphal text in the Minnesota manuscript that is the focus of my discussion below.)

[77] This text was edited in the early twentieth century (not without transcription errors) by Roscoe E. Parker, who included this poem with two other Middle English poems that feature Saint Anne. Hence the title of his book. From the perspective of a scholar of the apocrypha, this is misleading since this text does not focus on Anne. See *Middle English Stanzaic Versions of the Life of Saint Anne*, ed. by Parker; see also the 'Corrigenda', published in 1930. All future references to this poem will be to this edition, by line number. The manuscript will be abbreviated as MS Z, when not referred to as the 'Minnesota manuscript'.

[78] For a brief overview of this literature, see 'Apocryphal New Testament', in Cross and Livingstone, *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, pp. 85–86. Bruce M. Metzger sees curiosity as a basic human impulse: 'When people are curious, they usually take steps to satisfy their curiosity; so we should not be surprised that members of the early Church drew up accounts of what they supposed must have taken place' (Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, p. 167).

[79] At the end of the text, the author announces that his name is James; a popular audience may have considered him the stepbrother of Jesus (cf. Mark 6. 3), a son of Joseph from his first

the Nativity, narrating how Mary and Elizabeth saved their sons from Herod's wrath.[80] The apocryphal Infancy Gospel of Thomas (IGT), which was likewise composed in Greek in the second century, recounts what Jesus did as he was growing up.[81] It begins in medias res with the five-year-old Jesus playing at the riverside and concludes with a slightly different version of the story recounted in Luke (2. 41–52) about how the twelve-year-old Jesus travelled to Jerusalem with his parents to celebrate Passover and stayed behind in the Temple after their departure. In both texts, Jesus's parents eventually find him, sitting among the teachers, who are amazed by his questions and explanations of the law. After Mary questions her son about his behaviour, he returns home with his parents.[82] The Boy's ability to astound the Jews in the Lucan episode probably prompted the author of the IGT to recount miracles worked by Jesus during his boyhood. Both the IGT and the *Protoevangelium* were translated into Latin in the early Middle Ages.[83]

Sometime between the middle of the sixth and the end of the eighth century, an anonymous monk composed an apocryphal text using a Latin translation of the *Protoevangelium*.[84] A prologue was later attached to this text, which

marriage, though the author does not explicitly identify himself as such. See *The Infancy Gospels*, ed. and trans. by Hock, chap. 25, p. 77 and note, and pp. 8–9. See also *The Apocryphal New Testament*, ed. and trans. by Elliott, p. 49. When the priests pressure Joseph to take Mary as a wife, he initially objects, 'I already have sons': *The Infancy Gospels*, ed. and trans. by Hock, chap. 9, p. 49.

[80] For an edition and translation of the text, see *The Infancy Gospels*, ed. and trans. by Hock, pp. 32–77. For a short introduction to and translation of this text, see *The Apocryphal New Testament*, ed. and trans. by Elliott, pp. 48–67.

[81] The 'Infancy Gospel of Thomas' was not originally known as such, but rather referred to as something along the lines of 'The Boyhood Deeds of the Lord Jesus Christ'. See Voicu, 'Notes sur l'histoire du texte de L'*Histoire de l'Enfance de Jésus*', pp. 121–22; and *The Infancy Gospels*, ed. and trans. by Hock, pp. 84–85 and 90–91. In late medieval manuscripts the account is attributed to Thomas Israelita (or 'Ismaelita') or Thomas the Philosopher. Hence its modern title.

[82] For a translation of the text, see *The Infancy Gospels*, ed. and trans. by Hock, pp. 104–43. A full-length study of the text, including a translation, can be found in Aasgaard, *The Childhood of Jesus*. For an exhaustive study, see *De infantia Iesu euangelium Thomae graece*, ed. by Burke.

[83] For the IGT in Latin, see *Evangelia apocrypha*, ed. by Tischendorf, pp. 164–80. On the earliest witness to the Latin tradition, see Philippart, 'Fragments palimpsestes latins du Vindobonensis 563'. On the *Protoevangelium* in Latin, see Kaestli, 'Le *Protévangile de Jacques* en latin'.

[84] Rita Beyers and Jan Gijsel give this date of composition; see Beyers and Gijsel, 'Introduction générale aux deux textes édités', pp. 12–13. The author of Pseudo-Matthew apparently also used an anonymous account of the Flight into Egypt; see Gijsel's introduction to Pseudo-Matthew, *Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium*, in *Libri de nativitate Mariae*, ed. by Gijsel and Beyers, I, 43.

consists of a set of spurious letters between two bishops, named Cromatius and Heliodorus, and Saint Jerome. The bishops ask the renowned linguist to translate an account of Mary's origin and Christ's infancy, which Matthew the apostle supposedly wrote in Hebrew. They present the need for a faithful translation of this text as urgent, claiming that a heretical text dealing with the same topic is in circulation. Pseudo-Jerome agrees to carry out the translation, although the real Jerome (d. 420), a biblical scholar, was repulsed by this apocryphon.[85] It is due to this preface about the text's origins that modern scholars call it the 'Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew'.[86] Material from the Infancy Gospel of Thomas and, in addition, stories from oral tradition and non-Western sources were added to this text in the high and later Middle Ages. The manuscript families of Pseudo-Matthew that emerged at a later time continue the narrative by recounting, in a section entitled the 'Pars altera', what Jesus did as he was growing up.[87] His deeds often disturb the peace of village life and are usually miraculous in nature.

I have called attention to the title of Pseudo-Matthew because the author of the Middle English translation of an expanded version of this text in MS Z seems aware of the common medieval attribution of this text to Matthew, yet claims that the author was John the Evangelist.[88] Towards the end of his versification

[85] At least its account of the Nativity (which includes the detail of two Jewish midwives brought by Joseph to assist Mary in giving birth) and its claim that Joseph had children from a previous marriage. Jerome famously denounced the 'deliramenta apocryphorum' in a treatise written in defence of Mary's virginity; see Jerome, *Liber adversus Helvidium de perpetua virginitate B. Mariae*, ed. by Migne, col. 203. For the passage involving the midwives in the *Protoevangelium*, see *The Infancy Gospels*, ed. and trans. by Hock, pp. 64–69. The phrase also appears in Jerome's *Commentary on Matthew* (bk 1, c. 12, Jerome, *Commentaire sur saint Matthieu*, ed. by Bonnard, p. 262), where he objects to the idea that Joseph had been married and had sons before he wed the Virgin Mary. In both texts, Jerome explains that the Lord's *fratres* (cf. Matthew 12. 49) were his cousins.

[86] In the medieval period, the text was usually referred to as the *Infantia salvatoris* or by some similar title. See *The Apocryphal New Testament*, ed. and trans. by Elliott, p. 85. See, in addition, Dzon, 'Cecily Neville and the Apocryphal *Infantia salvatoris*', which deals with medieval churchmen's attitudes towards this text and its transformation into a work of devotional literature by the later Middle Ages.

[87] *Evangelia apocrypha*, ed. by Tischendorf, pp. 93–112. For an edition of the expanded Pseudo-Matthew in a thirteenth-century manuscript (BnF, MS lat. 11867), see *Livre de l'Enfance du Sauveur*, ed. and trans. by Dimier-Paupert. Gijsel, clearly interested in the earlier versions of Pseudo-Matthew, did not include stories about Jesus's childhood years in his edition (*Libri de nativitate Mariae*, ed. by Gijsel and Beyers, 1: *Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium*), though he did describe the manuscripts that include the extra material.

[88] While some Latin versions of Pseudo-Matthew, faithful to the tradition of the *Proto-*

of apocryphal stories about the births and childhoods of Mary and Jesus, a text extending almost 3500 lines of verse, the anonymous author defends the value of his work by informing his readers of its apostolic origins: he claims it was originally written by Saint John in Greek and then translated by Saint Matthew into Latin at the command of two bishops, Cromassi and Elydon (ll. 3409–26).[89] In the latter part of the narrative, we learn that John the Evangelist is Jesus's cousin (ll. 3075–76).[90] If the Evangelist grew up around Jesus and was close to him throughout his life, then it would make sense for him to write an account of Jesus's childhood.

Before turning to MS Z's portrayal of the Christ Child, I will first discuss its depiction of Mary as a pious girl and hagiographers' use of the *puer-senex* trope, since this will establish a valuable backdrop for my treatment of the apocryphal Jesus below. Note that MS Z is the only Middle English poem recounting the apocryphal childhood of Jesus that also deals with Mary's birth and childhood. Following Pseudo-Matthew, MS Z tells how Mary's parents offer her up at the Temple at age three. She climbs the fifteen steps by herself, and spends her girlhood in a sacred precinct, where her maturity amazes those who observe her. Her mother Anne, for instance, finds her in the Temple at prayer, 'Kneland als scho a woman ware | Prayand deuoutly' (ll. 320–21) — a perfect example of a *puella-senex*. The bishops

> [...] mervayld þat so 3ohng a thyng
> All hyr werkys to goddes plesyng [pleasing to God]
> So sone couth dresse & drawe. (ll. 346–48) [knew how to arrange and order]

evangelium Jacobi, attribute it to James, and others attribute it to Matthew, there are some extant Latin manuscripts that claim that John the Evangelist was its author, such as the copy of Pseudo-Matthew in Firenze, Bibl. Medicea Laurenziana, MS Gaddi 208, a manuscript from northern Italy that dates to the fourteenth century; see *Evangelia apocrypha*, ed. by Tischendorf, p. 112, n. 2; and *Libri de nativitate Mariae*, ed. by Gijsel and Beyers, 1: *Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium*, 183–84.

[89] Instead of the text originally being written in Hebrew, here it is said to have first been written down in Greek. At the beginning of the poem, the author similarly states that his text was 'fand | in grew [Greek]' by 'seynt mathew', who 'Made it in latyn [...] | Als saynt Ierom þe doctour trew' (ll. 8–11). Here and below I refer to *Middle English Stanzaic Versions of the Life of Saint Anne*, ed. by Parker.

[90] The Dominican Giovanni Dominici (d. 1419) advised a Florentine noblewoman to expose her child to depictions of the boy Jesus together with the young Evangelist. See Dominici, *Regola del governo di cura familiare*, ed. by Salvi, p. 131.

Mary is said to order the hours of her day wisely, dividing her time between prayer and manual labour (sewing), as in the monastic tradition.[91] An angel feeds her daily at noon, but she also interacts with less spiritual beings: other girls in the Temple who speak foolishly. Whenever they 'Legh [laughed] or sayd any wanton sawes', Mary mildly rebukes them (l. 392). Recall that in one of the courtesy poems mentioned above, boys were instructed not to laugh in an obnoxious manner in the presence of their lord or to behave 'as a Wanton fole'. While the child Mary of the Englished Pseudo-Matthew embodies courteous behaviour, it takes her son a long time in his youth before he puts aside his wanton ways.

How might we account for this difference in characterization of Mary and Jesus as children? On a simple level, we can see it as a reflection of medieval gender expectations for young people, which seem to agree with the traditional view of girls as sweet and docile and boys as mischievous. We might infer that, in the Middle Ages, not only were girls taught to be that way, but that this behaviour was thought to come to them rather naturally. In his chapter on the *puella* (girl), the thirteenth-century Franciscan encyclopaedist Bartholomaeus Anglicus notes that girls are 'tendre, smal, pliaunt, and faire of disposicioun of body; schamefast, fereful, and mury [cheerful], touchinge the affecioun [according to their emotional disposition]; delicat in clothinge'.[92] While Bartholomaeus speaks poorly of adult females,[93] his description of the generic 'good girl' is not that different from the Minnesota manuscript's portrayal of the pious girl Mary.[94]

Rosalynn Voaden and Stephanie Volf offer a different interpretation of medieval girlhood in an essay in which they examine the childhoods of a number of

[91] As Gijsel notes, Pseudo-Matthew seems to have been redacted with a monastic audience in mind, *Libri de nativitate Mariae*, ed. by Gijsel and Beyers, 1: *Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium*, 57–58.

[92] Trevisa, *On the Properties of Things*, ed. by Seymour, pp. 301–02. Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De rerum proprietatibus*, VI. 6, p. 240. For a translation of this chapter (and the encyclopaedist's chapter on the *puer*), see Goodich, 'Bartholomaeus Anglicus on Child-Rearing'. On medieval girlhood, see Kline, 'Female Childhoods'; Goldberg, 'Childhood and Gender'; and Phillips, *Young Medieval Women*.

[93] In the same chapter on the *puella*, Bartholomaeus says of women: 'þey ben merciable, and also enuyous, bittir, gileful, and abil to lerne, hasty in likinge of Venus' (Trevisa, *On the Properties of Things*, ed. by Seymour, p. 302). A more detailed description is found in the corresponding Latin text: every female is 'animus insolens, ad iracundiam pronus, tenax odii, misericors, inuidus, laboris impatiens, docilis, subdolus, amarus, in libidinem praeceps' (Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De rerum proprietatibus*, VI. 6, p. 240).

[94] This seems to call into question the view that, in the Middle Ages, the Virgin was thought to exist in a class unto herself, rather than share traits with other females. See Warner, *Alone of All her Sex*. Warner's monograph on Mary has now been superseded by Rubin, *Mother of God*.

saints, primarily from the later Middle Ages. Noting that female saints tend to be portrayed as exceedingly pious in their childhood, while a number of male saints are said to have weathered the storms of a sinful youth, the authors suggest that hagiographers' emphasis upon females' saintliness in their girlhood was a way of counteracting negative cultural assumptions about women as morally (and physiologically) weak by nature.[95]

One of the most vivid portrayals of saintly girlhood is that by the Dominican Raymond of Capua in his *vita* of Catherine of Siena (d. 1380). After learning the 'Ave Maria' at about age five, Catherine would recite this prayer on each step of the staircase, at times going up and down it as if not touching the steps at all. At age six, Catherine had a vision of Christ, after which 'her actions [...] had nothing childish, nothing girlish, about them, but showed all the signs of a most venerable maturity'. Wishing to imitate the desert fathers, Catherine 'would seek out hidden places and scourge her young body in secret with a special rope. She gave up childish games and devoted her time to prayer and meditation instead'. Raymond marvels that Catherine 'took less and less food to sustain her — a thing un-heard of in the case of growing children', the last remark echoing Bartholomaeus Anglicus and other scientific writers. While Catherine would at times go off on her own, she also led other girls to works of piety, namely, prayer and self-flagellation. All these deeds, Raymond remarks, were 'praesagia futurorum'.[96] While Catherine was, we might say, an eccentric little girl, other girls were able to imitate her, at least to a certain extent. Like Catherine of Siena, Margaret of Hungary (d. 1270), a princess placed in a Dominican convent as a child, 'drew to prayer the other girls who wished to play, saying, "Let us enter the church, let us greet God and the blessed Virgin: let that be our play"'. She is also said to have prayed the Hours of the Virgin with the sisters and 'fled childhood games'.[97] Like her niece Margaret, Saint Elizabeth of Hungary (d. 1231), when she was a girl, strove to be devout and despised 'idle games'. Her *vita* includes a scene that describes her playing tag or some other game with other girls, but indicates that Elizabeth preferred prayer: 'Her servants and

[95] Voaden and Volf, 'Visions of my Youth'. Madeleine Jeay likewise focuses on the girlhood of saints from the later Middle Ages: Jeay, 'L'Enfant appelé par Dieu dans le récit hagiographique'. While I would agree that such portrayals call attention to the paradoxical nature of such children, who are similar to the *puer-senex* Jesus of later medieval sources, I believe greater weight should be given to the inimitability and thus uniqueness of the apocryphal Christ Child, whom Jeay mentions (ibid., p. 22, n. 77) but does not emphasize.

[96] Raymond of Capua, *Vita S. Catharinae Senensis*, pp. 860–61. Here citing the translation, Raymond of Capua, *The Life of St Catherine of Siena*, trans. by Lamb, pp. 24–27.

[97] Garin de Gy l'Évêque, *Vita b. Margaritae Hungaricae*, p. 516.

playmates noticed that when one of them in the course of a game went into the chapel, Elizabeth followed her, profiting by the opportunity to get into the church; and when she entered, she would kneel down or lie full length on the floor.'[98] Engaging in secular play got Catherine of Vadstena (d. 1381) into trouble; when she succumbed to peer pressure and played with dolls on one occasion, she had a nightmare in which doll-shaped demons beat her.[99] Like Mary in the Minnesota manuscript, the girl Lutgard of Aywières (d. 1246) 'would have nothing to do with indecent jokes, love talk, or girlish silliness'.[100] Although these saintly girls seem unnaturally severe, their hagiographers probably hoped that Christian parents who heard these stories would encourage pious behaviour in their daughters and that the young girls who heard these accounts would strive to be holy.

The male hagiographers who composed these texts, according to Voaden and Volf, were trying their hardest to present female saints in the best possible light in an age of rampant anti-feminism. An exaggeration of childhood piety was supposedly not necessary for males, who after puberty 'could spring fully formed into the arena of sanctity, shaking off any previous indiscretions'.[101] That male saints were allowed more leeway in their early years is supported by the example of Cuthbert given above. Yet there are a number of saintly boys who did not experience a minor or full-blown conversion. For example, the boy Hermann-Joseph (d. 1241), who became a Premonstratensian canon, was intensely devoted to the Virgin and played with the Christ Child and John the Evangelist in a wholesome manner.[102] Like Hermann-Joseph, Saint Edmund of Abingdon (d. 1240) went off on his own to pray when his schoolmates engaged in play. The Christ Child

[98] Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. by Ryan, II, 303. Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, ed. by Maggioni, II, chap. 164, p. 1157. See further, Goodich, 'A Saintly Child and a Saint of Children'.

[99] Birgersson, *Vita S. Catharinae Suedicae filiae S. Birgittae*, p. 504. Katarina of Sweden is also known to have fasted from the breast (like Nicholas): ibid., pp. 503–04. For a recent study of Katarina who, in Anglophone scholarship, has been overshadowed by her saintly mother Birgitta, see DuBois, 'St Katarina in her Own Light'.

[100] Thomas of Cantimpré, *The Collected Saints' Lives*, ed. by Newman, trans. by King and Newman, p. 216; 'sed jocos inhonestos fugit, et amatorias confabulationes, et ineptias penitus puellares': Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita S. Lutgardis*, p. 191. For another example, see bk I, chap. 1, of Jacques de Vitry, *Vita of Mary of Oignies*, trans. by King, p. 52. For the Latin, see Jacques de Vitry, *Vita*, p. 550.

[101] Voaden and Volf, 'Visions of My Youth', pp. 666 and 675.

[102] *Vita B. Hermanni Josephi*, p. 685. For a brief discussion of Herman-Joseph's Marian devotion, see Muir, 'Bride or Bridegroom?', pp. 69–72.

appeared to him and told him that he would always be with him — that he was his playmate even.[103] There are many other boys who conformed to the model of the *puer-senex*. In other words, we can find many examples of pious girls and saintly boys, who are the complete opposites of their peers. Furthermore, not all *vitae* of female saints suggest that their road to sanctity was without any bumps or detours. While there are extreme examples of harlots who convert, there are also instances of females who go astray in minor ways.[104] I am thus inclined to disagree with Voaden and Volf's claim that hagiographers purposefully exaggerated the saintliness of girls, more so than that of boys. While we can find plenty of examples of holy children of both genders, it seems fair to say, nevertheless, that in the later Middle Ages, boys, in comparison to girls, were regarded as (and possibly allowed to be) more 'wanton', in the sense of mischievous and rowdy. The ordinary girls we see in the background of female saints' *vitae* and in Pseudo-Matthew seem vain and spiteful rather than rambunctious, like Cuthbert's playmates and Jesus (initially).[105]

[103] 'Miror, ait, quod ita tibi sum incognitus, prasertim cum in scholis ad latus tuum sedeam, & tibi sim quocumque fueris inseparabiliter sociatus': chap. 6 of the *vita* compiled by the monks of Pontigny, *Vita S. Edmundi Cantuariensis archiepiscopi et confessoris*, ed. by Martène and Durand, cols 1778–79. In the corresponding passage in the *South English Legendary* in Oxford, Bodl. Libr., MS Laud Misc. 108 (a manuscript that contains an apocryphal narrative about Jesus's childhood, as noted above), the Christ Child adds, 'þi plei-fere [playfellow], for-soþe, ich am': *The Early South-English Legendary*, ed. by Horstmann, p. 433, l. 69.

[104] To take an example, Thomas of Cantimpré recounts how Margaret of Ypres, who demanded to be given holy communion at age five and 'from that time [...] despised all childish things', and 'never mingled with playmates', fell in love with a handsome young man at age eighteen. Fortunately, she never sinned with him and was converted from worldly things when she heard the preaching of a visiting Dominican. Thomas of Cantimpré, *The Collected Saints' Lives*, ed. by Newman, trans. by King and Newman, pp. 167–68. For the Latin, see Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Margarete de Ypris*, ed. by Meersseman, pp. 108–09.

[105] An example of females' spitefulness occurs in Pseudo-Matthew (chap. 8), which tells how the other virgins were envious of Mary's being chosen to spin the thread that would be used for the veil of the Temple; see *Libri de nativitate Mariae*, ed. by Gijsel and Beyers, 1: *Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium*, 372–75. But for a positive view, see a fifteenth-century depiction of these maidens as young girls, who 'spend their time praying and doing needle-work [...] with sweet doll-like faces [...] bending busily over their embroidery or prayer-books, leading the lives of medieval nuns': Végh, *Fifteenth Century German and Bohemian Panel Paintings*, no. 37. For an example of boys' rough-housing in the poem in MS Z, see ll. 1591–95. An exception to medieval writers' tendency to portray girls as physically inactive is the vignette in Elizabeth of Hungary's *vita* (cited above) that describes her and other girls playing a game that involved running around. In her study of childhood among late medieval English peasant families, Barbara A. Hanawalt provides evidence that boys were in fact more active than girls: 'Boys were more aggressive in

The 'Wanton' Christ Child in MS Z822 N81

Skipping over MS Z's account of the events that transpired on the Flight into Egypt, I wish to begin a more extensive examination of the apocryphal Christ Child in this manuscript with its depiction of the five-year-old Jesus playing in the sand with other children, making little pools (ll. 1724–34). Although the gender of Jesus's playmates in this scene and in others is not specified, I think it is fair to assume that the children with whom Jesus interacts are boys, since those to whom the poet calls attention are always male. When the Christ Child was playing in the sand on this occasion, one of the boys, the son of a priest, 'spitously' (spitefully) destroyed the pools of water that Jesus had made (ll. 1735–38). Jesus takes offence at the boy's destructive act and curses him, calling him 'deuel son, seed of wykkednes' (l. 1744). The boy thereupon falls upon the ground, stunned, 'baran & bare' (l. 1746), like the fig tree that withered when the adult Christ cursed it (Matthew 21. 18–19; Matthew 12. 12–14, 20–21). As if oblivious to the dead body in their midst, Jesus and his playmates leave the boy lying there and return to their game; they are so enthralled with their play that 'Ffor hym wald þai noght spare' (they would not desist (from play) on his account) (ll. 1750–52). Jesus then makes birds out of clay, an activity that gets him into trouble because in doing so he seems to work on the Sabbath. When a Jewish adult comes to the spot where the boys are playing and sees this, he takes Jesus home and complains to his father: '3owr child has wroght | Expreyse [directly] agayn our laye [law]' (ll. 1763–64). Rather than ask the child for an explanation of his misdeed, as he does in the corresponding passage in the IGT,[106]

> Ioseph on hys heued þan ihesus smate; [smote]
> He sayde; þu sulde be with us algate, [always]
> Fra wanton childer draw. (ll. 1765–67) [withdrawn from unruly children]

Here the Christ Child's playmates are the ones called 'wanton', presumably because Joseph thinks they are having an adverse effect on his foster-son. By striking Jesus (which he does not do in this scene in the Greek or Latin source texts), Joseph indicates that he thinks that he is also a wanton boy, that is, one needing to be disciplined. Jesus commands the clay birds that he fashioned to fly

their investigations of their environment and consequently had more accidents' (Hanawalt, *The Ties That Bound*, p. 181).

[106] *The Infancy Gospels*, ed. and trans. by Hock, p. 107. Joseph also questions his son and does not hit him in Pseudo-Matthew's account of this episode: *Evangelia apocrypha*, ed. by Tischendorf, chap. 27, p. 95; and in the Latin version of the IGT: *Evangelia apocrypha*, ed. by Tischendorf, chap. 4, p. 167.

forth, which they do — a miracle that trumps the Jew's censure of his blameless pastime (l. 1768).

When the priest misses his son and learns what happened from the other children, he and his friends go to Joseph's house and complain to him:

> [...] gud man, all hayle [greetings]
> 3our childe þat standes before us here
> On better maner bus 3ow hym lere [it behooves you to teach him better manners]
> Elles all 3our frenshyp wil fayle. (ll. 1785–88)

By accusing Jesus of having bad manners, these adults are in effect saying that he is a 'wanton' boy. They threaten to expel Joseph and his family from their community unless he learns to control his son. To stay on good terms with his 'friends', Joseph blames Jesus on the spot, although he does not actually know how to make him change his ways. When Joseph returns home, he tells Mary to command Jesus to reform his manners lest the Jews kill him. He places the burden of disciplining the Boy on Mary by reminding her that he is 'hyr 3ong son' (l. 1801), and by implication, only Joseph's through adoption. Joseph is concerned not only about Jesus's well-being, but also about his own safety and that of his wife. Mary must alter Jesus's behaviour, Joseph says, 'Elles wyll he gar us all be shent [cause us all to be ruined] | & into pryson be tane [taken]' (ll. 1802–03). Joseph's abdication of fatherly authority and his excessive worrying would no doubt have undermined his masculinity in the minds of the poem's late medieval audience, as do earlier scenes in the poem (ultimately based upon the *Protoevangelium*), in which Joseph calls attention to his advanced age and physical weakness (e.g. ll. 497, 532, 563–66, and 1396).[107] Complying with his mother's wishes, Jesus resurrects the dead boy, even though he considers him a miscreant (ll. 1830–32).

In another episode, when Jesus is on his way home, he causes a child who has run into him to drop down dead. While Jesus's punishment of the boy seems way out of proportion to the offence given — 'death for a bump' — the child's collision with Jesus seems intended: the boy flees after running into Jesus, but the Christ Child causes him to fall down, literally dead in his tracks.[108] To rebuke Jesus for causing another death, 'Ioseph toke þan ihesus be þe eres' (l. 1856).[109]

[107] On the Middle English legends' portrayal of Joseph, see Dzon, 'Joseph and the Amazing Christ Child'; and Sheingorn, 'Joseph the Carpenter's Failure'.

[108] In Pseudo-Matthew, the boy who runs into Jesus is described as 'volens eum eludere aut nocere si posset': *Evangelia apocrypha*, ed. by Tischendorf, chap. 28, p. 96. The phrase 'death for a bump' comes from Bagley, 'Jesus at School', p. 14.

[109] Joseph does this in the IGT and the Latin version, but not in the corresponding passage in Pseudo-Matthew. See *The Infancy Gospels*, ed. and trans. by Hock, pp. 110–11. *Evangelia*

Figure 4. Tring Tile, London, Victoria and Albert Museum, early fourteenth century. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

In doing so, Joseph shows his agreement with the assessment of other adults that 'Ihesus, 3owr sone so wode [out of control] and wylde, | Ryght now has he slayne our child' (ll. 1852–53). Note that in both cases of injury that I have mentioned the adults notify the paterfamilias Joseph, not Mary, about Jesus's unruly behaviour. While this essay focuses on the 'wanton' Christ Child, it is obviously also concerned with Joseph and Mary, for as his parents they are responsible for his behaviour. The boy who runs into Jesus, like the boy who ruined the little pools, is resurrected at Mary's request (ll. 1883–84).

A depiction of a Jewish neighbour complaining to Joseph is found on one of the early fourteenth-century Tring Tiles,[110] which have been thought to come from Tring Church in Hertfordshire, England. The tiles' lack of wear suggests that they were displayed for parishioners to see, as a wall frieze.[111] Executed using

apocrypha, ed. by Tischendorf, chap. 5, p. 169; chap. 29, p. 97.

[110] For more detailed discussions of these tiles, see Casey, 'Conversion as Depicted on the Fourteenth-Century Tring Tiles', figs 1–14; Casey, 'The Apocryphal Infancy of Christ'; Bale, *Feeling Persecuted*, pp. 45–50, who focuses on the violence depicted on the tiles; Eames, *Catalogue of Medieval Lead-Glazed Earthenware Tiles*, I, 56–61, and 70–71, pl. 2; II, drawings 15–30; and James, 'Rare Medieval Tiles', who discusses the similarities between the tiles and the miniatures in Oxford, Bodl. Libr., MS Selden Supra 38. For an overview of medieval artistic renderings of the apocryphal infancy legends, see Cartlidge and Elliott, *Art and the Christian Apocrypha*, chap. 2, esp. pp. 98–116.

[111] Alexander and Binski, *Age of Chivalry*, p. 283. Eames, *Catalogue of Medieval Lead-Glazed*

the delicate sgraffito technique, these earthenware tiles depict a number of scenes from the apocryphal legends about Christ's childhood. There are ten surviving intact tiles, eight of which are now in the British Museum and two in the Victoria and Albert. There are also three surviving fragments. On one of the tiles (V&A–2A), we see a Jewish neighbour accosting Joseph on the left-hand side, with what appear to be two gossips behind them (Figure 4).[112] Joseph expresses his dismay by holding his hand to his face: how is he to prevent his foster-son from causing trouble within the community? It does not seem possible. In depictions of the Nativity we often see Joseph sitting apart and turned away from Mary and the baby Jesus, with his hand to his face in a similar pose, except that in these scenes he is usually sleeping, dozing, or dazed by depression.[113] On the literal level, such a depiction attributes weakness to Mary's spouse, a depiction that parallels the portrayal of Jesus's foster-father as an ineffective parent, on both the tile and in MS Z (although in the tile Joseph looks middle-aged). Yet as André Grabar has pointed out, such a rendering of Joseph in Nativity scenes had theological significance, symbolizing his non-participation in Jesus's conception. The Nativity image also conveys, more sociologically, Christians' view of the Jews as existing apart (though not necessarily excluded) from the New Dispensation.[114] The fact that Joseph, in the Middle English poem, has such a difficult time controlling his 'wanton' son illustrates, along similar lines, his negligible role in Jesus's formation. It may also suggest his extrinsic position vis-à-vis the emerging Christian community that consists of Mary and Jesus and those who are awed by the Child's power and docile to his teaching. On the right-hand side of the same title (V&A–2B), we see Jesus holding a book, blessing and possibly preaching to three children,

Earthenware Tiles, I, 59, thinks the tiles' lack of inscriptions imply that they were intended for an audience of illiterate parishioners; Vitz, 'The Apocryphal and the Biblical', p. 135, assumes that such shocking images would have been hidden from public view, comparing them to the depictions on misericords. Casey, 'The Apocryphal Infancy of Christ', pp. 30–37, identifies likely places in the church where they might have been displayed, though she considers their original provenance uncertain.

[112] Art historians have located its place within the cycle on the basis of its similarity to a miniature in Oxford, Bodl. Libr., MS Selden Supra 38; see Casey, 'The Apocryphal Infancy of Christ', p. 16. Narratively speaking, the tile could have been positioned in a few places within the complete cycle since Jews complain to Joseph on a number of occasions.

[113] The fifteenth-century Observant friar Bernardino of Siena, clearly aware of this motif, criticized 'foolish painters [who ...] portray [Joseph] as a melancholy old man, resting his cheek upon his hand'. Quoted by Origo, *The World of San Bernardino*, p. 38. This early medieval and Byzantine motif can be seen in Giotto's depiction of the Nativity in the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua.

[114] Grabar, *Christian Iconography*, p. 130. Mellinkoff, *The Outcasts*, II, fig. xi.41.

whose kneeling posture indicates their submission to the Boy's authority. They clearly have a high opinion of Jesus, unlike the Jewish elders and even Joseph.

Elizabeth Eames has commented on the humourous aspect of the tiles, noting that the artist 'who drew these pictures had a lively sense of humour and an acute awareness of human foibles'.[115] In his recent study of the IGT, Reidar Aasgaard likewise notes the entertainment value of these apocryphal stories.[116] Joseph's fear of the impending doom that awaits Jesus and the Holy Family and his inability to do anything about it can be viewed as a comic theme that runs throughout the Middle English poem in MS Z. The poet seems to be gently teasing Joseph, rather than irreverently mocking him. In many ways, the poem's portrayal of an old, often flustered, and generally incompetent Joseph parallels the way he is characterized in contemporary drama, particularly the plays about Joseph's doubts of Mary's virginity and his confusion as to how he should deal with her unexpected and inexplicable pregnancy.[117] While the plays do not dramatize stories from the apocrypha about the Christ Child's disruptive behaviour, we find a trace of these legends in 'The Finding in the Temple' Play in the N-Town Cycle, in which Mary is worried that her talented son, while still a child, has acquired enemies.[118]

In the poem about Jesus's childhood in the Minnesota manuscript, Joseph is portrayed as much more fretful than Mary about the dangers menacing their son. While Christ's mother trusts that God, who sent him to her, will protect him (ll. 2108–12), she nevertheless does her part to curb the Child's obnoxiousness. For instance, when 'with wordes myld' she asks her 'Swete son' (ll. 1810–11) why he has cursed the priest's son who ruined his pools, and requests that he bring

[115] Eames, *Catalogue of Medieval Lead-Glazed Earthenware Tiles*, 1, 59–60. Cf. Alexander and Binski, *Age of Chivalry*, p. 284. C. M. Kauffmann, 'Art and Popular Culture', p. 50 and pl. 4, calls the apocryphal infancy legends recounted in the related Holkham Bible 'amusing and exaggeratedly fanciful'.

[116] Aasgaard points to the comic lament of the schoolmaster Zacchaeus who is overcome by his pupil Jesus, seeing in it 'a distinct slapstick quality': Aasgaard, *The Childhood of Jesus*, p. 48. On the IGT as an entertaining narrative, see chaps 3 and 12.

[117] This and other details no doubt led the early twentieth-century editor of the poem to claim that it was the source text for the N-Town plays; see *Middle English Stanzaic Versions of the Life of Saint Anne*, ed. by Parker, pp. xxxiv–liii. On the plays' portrayal of Joseph, see, among others, Kolve, *The Play Called Corpus Christi*, pp. 247–53; Walsh, 'Divine Cuckold/Holy Fool'; and Flanigan, 'Everyman or Saint?'. Paul Payan, 'Ridicule? L'image ambigüe de Saint Joseph', suggests that Joseph was depicted in a variety of ways, not simply as a cuckolded husband.

[118] *The N-Town Play*, ed. by Spector, p. 205, ll. 221–24. Joannes Vriend, *The Blessed Virgin Mary*, pp. 124–25, had earlier suggested a connection between the apocrypha and this passage. On the N-Town play's depiction of Mary as a pious girl, which parallels that in the Minnesota poem, see Tasioulas, 'Between Doctrine and Domesticity'.

him back to life, Jesus decides to resurrect the boy. He does this, the poet tells us, since he 'wald no3t hys modyr wreght' (did not wish to make his mother angry) (l. 1822). Although Mary, next to Jesus, is depicted holding a birch-rod in some late medieval visual sources,[119] in this poem Mary influences the Christ Child only through soothing words, not through corporal punishment or even the threat of it.[120] While the relative ease with which the apocryphal Jesus changes from a spirit of vengefulness to one of forbearance seems to reflect the medieval view of children's emotional instability and levity,[121] it is also a manifestation of contemporary devotion to Mary as a powerful intercessor and worker of miracles.[122] The fact that Mary's cult was already thriving within different sectors of society whilst Joseph's was barely emerging helps to explain why the Virgin is portrayed as an effective parent but the carpenter is not.[123] Medieval culture prescribed a hierarchy within the family, whereby men were the head of the household, but the duty of disciplining children belonged to both parents.[124] This is reflected in

[119] Namely, in scenes that show her taking Jesus to school. See Clanchy, 'An Icon of Literacy', fig. 4: Liverpool, Walker Art Gall., MS Mayer 12004, fol. 7^{r}; see further Frojmovic, 'Taking Little Jesus to School'. In the traditional 'Ballad of the Bitter Witty', which was influenced by the apocrypha, Mary strikes Jesus with a willow after he causes his playmates to die; see Gerould, 'Ballad of the Bitter Withy'.

[120] In another passage, the Jews become blind as a result of accusing Jesus of misdeeds, 'Bot ihesus at prayer of myld mary | Heled tham all soth to tell' (ll. 1883–84).

[121] Bartholomaeus Anglicus enunciates this idea when he says that children (*pueri*) 'ben eþeliche [easily] and sone wrooth and sone iplesed and for3euen sone': Trevisa, *On the Properties of Things*, ed. by Seymour, p. 300; Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De rerum proprietatibus*, VI. 5, p. 239. Jacobus de Voragine also calls attention to children's emotional instability in an exemplum that relates how a prostitute sought forgiveness of the Christ Child: she thought she would be damned, 'cogitans uero quod de facili placantur, Christum per suam infantiam adiurauit et uocem de sua uenia audire meruit' (Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. by Ryan, I, 42; Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, ed. by Maggioni, I, chap. 6, p. 73).

[122] On the growing popularity of the Marian miracle stories from the twelfth century onwards, see Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages*, pp. 246–54. See also Rubin, *Mother of God*, chap. 14, and Boyarin, *Miracles of the Virgin in Medieval England*.

[123] The late medieval churchman Jean Gerson is known for promoting devotion to Joseph as a saint. Like Jerome, he found the apocryphal infancy legends distasteful, no doubt due to their derogatory depiction of Joseph as an old widower when he married the Virgin. He may also have been aware of the apocryphal legends about Jesus's childhood. For his objection to the book *De l'enfance du Sauveur*, see Gerson, *Considérations sur Saint Joseph*, ed. by Glorieux, pp. 76–77. See further Herlihy, 'The Making of the Medieval Family', pp. 205–07; McGuire, 'When Jesus Did the Dishes'; and Sheingorn, '"Illustris patriarcha Joseph": Jean Gerson'.

[124] The early fifteenth-century moral treatise *Dives and Pauper* states that 'Þe fadir & modir schul answern [...] for her [their] childyrs wyckydnesse, but þei don her deuer [duty] to chastysen

Figure 5. Tring Tile, London, British Museum, early fourteenth century.
Reproduced with kind permission of the British Museum.

Mary's response to the Jews' question about the wonder-working Boy's origins: 'Als oures we sall hym drysse' (we shall discipline him as ours). By saying that both she and Joseph will deal with Jesus, she avoids discussing the confusing situation of Christ's having two fathers.

Up to this point, certain characters in the poem have considered Jesus 'wanton' on account of his unrestrained use of power when interacting with other children and his disregard for Jewish law — both of which behaviours the Jewish adults attribute to the Boy's lack of socialization. While the Christ Child causes the death of his playmates on a number of occasions, in the two cases we have considered so far (basically tiffs on the playground that turn lethal), the deaths result from divine vengeance rather than sadistic amusement, such as that displayed by Shakespeare's fly-killers. Thus, we have not yet seen the Child act as a 'wanton' boy in the latter specialized sense. From the perspective of the poem's Middle English audience, the Child playing in the sand, before the trouble starts, can be regarded as 'wanton' in a neutral sense of that word. Christ's wantonness is also manifested — and I would say most properly — in the way in which he reacts to being placed under the tutelage of teachers by his parents at the instigation of the Jewish elders.

hem in her ȝougþe': *Dives and Pauper*, ed. by Barnum, p. 325. See further Grace, 'Aspects of Fatherhood'.

Jesus is sent to school three different times, first when he is seven. On this occasion, the Boy responds rudely to his Jewish master by proving the man's ignorance of the meaning of the letters of the alphabet:

> Ihesus sayd, tell maister or þu ga [before you go]
> Ffyrst what es .b. algate, [entirely]
> And I sall tell what a. es þan. (ll. 2093–95)

Provoked by such insubordination, the master, who was 'a dispitous [spiteful] man' (l. 2096), smites Jesus and immediately falls dead. Note that Jesus does not actually strike his teacher or, for that matter, anyone else in the poem. The poet simply states: '& ded [Death] smate hym & slow [slew] hym sone' (l. 2098). This conflict is depicted on one of the Tring Tiles (TT-4A; Figure 5). Whereas the Middle English text simply says that the teacher 'fortene [due to anger] [...] smate' Jesus (l. 2097), Pseudo-Matthew and the IGT say that the teacher hit his pupil on the head.[125] The tile makes the teacher seem more odious by depicting him slapping Jesus on the face. He is even ogre-like in appearance, with his large head, big nose, and bulging eyes. To sum up: in the first school scene, Jesus's teacher inflicts corporal punishment on him, as his foster-father had done earlier, yet the result is quite different.

When Joseph hears about this incident, he is so 'yll payd' (displeased) (l. 2101) that he tells Mary, 'Þi child I will ga fra hym [depart from him]. | He dos so many a wykkid dede' (ll. 2103–04). Joseph, however, does not carry through with his threat by abandoning the Holy Family. Instead, he sends the Child to school again, at the suggestion of a certain master called Zacchaeus, who sees great potential in the lad:

> Why gare ye no3th lere 3ow[r] child, he sayd, [not have your child educated]
> Me thynke 3e er to blam.
> He begyns fast to manstate at draw; [man's estate; to]
> Ffor þi lat lere hym of moyses law. (ll. 2117–20) [Therefore let him learn]

This adult's perspective on the value of education for the young boy echoes the instructional poem quoted earlier, in which the narrator tells the reader to go to school and 'fare not as Wanton fole', holding out the possibility that the boy may become a bishop someday.[126]

[125] See *Evangelia apocrypha*, ed. by Tischendorf, chap. 31, p. 100; and *The Infancy Gospels*, ed. and trans. by Hock, chap. 6, p. 117.

[126] *Early English Meals and Manners*, ed. by Furnivall, p. 383, l. 78. The master is portrayed as hopeful that Jesus will grow up to be a good rabbi, but the poem is not explicit as to whether the Jewish teacher thinks that Jesus should learn Moses' law because of its intrinsic value or

The second educational experiment involving Jesus and a teacher does not work either because Jesus scoffs at the teacher's learning and claims to know the date of the teacher's birth, which astonishes him. By revealing his great wisdom, Jesus acts like a *puer-senex*, that is, as a child who seems much older than his years.[127] Yet Jesus is not simply preternaturally wise like other *pueri-senes*, such as the newborn Saint Rumwold who proclaimed 'I am a Christian!', demanded baptism from a certain priest, preached a sermon, and then died on the third day of his life.[128] While Jesus, like Rumwold, displays uncanny rationality, he is also an obnoxious know-it-all, who, in this scene, emphasizes the limitations of the Jews' learning. He tells the teacher that 'þou can of [know] worldes doctrine', and then brags that 'I before þe law haues knawyng | & further 3it can I reche' (ll. 2129, 2132–33). The Christ Child, however, is not always antagonistic. When Jesus is taken to school on a third occasion, he sees a book, opens it, and, in a calm manner ('gracyuosly', l. 2207), explains the prophets and the law: 'He undid þam lest & maste | As he red þam on rawe' (ll. 2201–02). Hearing this, the teacher sends him home since 'He ys þe wysest of all place' (l. 2212).[129]

On the whole, the school scenes from MS Z suggest that Jesus is 'wanton', in the sense of being both rude and not teachable. The Christ Child, though, is not

whether his motive is one of vicarious ambition. While the poet may intend a negative portrayal of Jews as worldly, not all medieval Christians perceived Jews in this way. In fact, a remark by a pupil of Peter Abelard implies the very opposite: 'If the Christians educate their sons, they do so not for God, but for gain, in order that one brother, if he be a clerk, may help his father and mother and brothers [...]. But the Jews, out of zeal for God and love of the law, put as many sons as they have to letters.' Quoted in Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, p. 55. For the Latin, see *Commentarius Cantabrigiensis*, ed. by Landgraf, II, 434.

[127] Those around him who heard his words said, 'the child is elder far than he semes' (l. 2141). Role reversal is emphasized in this scene by the teacher's remark that he has found his master (l. 2148).

[128] *Vita S. Rumwoldi*, ed. by Love. Rumwold's profession of the Christian faith imitates that of Saint Quiricus, a three-year-old supposedly martyred with his mother in the beginning of the fourth century. While Rumwold simply 'gave up his spirit', Quiricus attacked the pagan governor who ordered his mother to be scourged: he 'scratched the man's face with his fingernails, crying out [...] "I too am a Christian!"' When the child bit him, the governor dashed him down, 'his tender brains spilling down the steps': Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. by Ryan, I, 323–24; Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, ed. by Maggioni, I, chap. 78, pp. 533–34. For a fifteenth-century depiction of Quiricus's martyrdom, see Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, ed. by Levasti, I, 316–17.

[129] This episode is based on Chapter 15 of the IGT; see *The Infancy Gospels*, ed. and trans. by Hock, pp. 134–37. Both texts seem to allude to Luke 4. 16–22, which tells of how the adult Jesus goes into a synagogue and then reads from the book of Isaiah.

'uneducated' like other children who have not yet been sent to school or are in need of further learning; having no use for schooling, Jesus is ineducable and seems resentful of the effort of adults to teach him. As Joseph said of Jesus to the second master before he undertook his tutelage: 'who can hym lere [teach]?' (l. 2122). Embedded in these school scenes is the idea that Jesus, even when he was a boy, was filled with wisdom. This notion was common among patristic and medieval theologians, except that they, unlike the purveyors of the legends about Jesus's childhood, do not address the practical issue of how he was educated during his boyhood. Nevertheless, they seem aware of the potential problem of claiming that the incarnate Wisdom passed through boyhood as a real child, that is, as one who develops gradually. One of their solutions is to say that he only seemed to grow in wisdom.[130] Rather than imitate the scholastics who tried to solve such problems through clever distinctions, Middle English authors recognized the paradox of a young boy possessing both childish characteristics and boundless wisdom, and exploited its dramatic potential.

Another way in which the boy Jesus is 'wanton' is that he would much rather play outside with other boys (by the riverside, for example) than be in school. Yet the boys Jesus interacts with are both his playmates and his playthings. Although the Christ Child acts as one of the boys by playing the same games as they, he is intent upon letting them know that he is an exceptional child who possesses wonderful powers — he is not their equal. On one occasion he teaches them this lesson by leaping upon a sunbeam. Going out to play with many children in a meadow on a sunny day, 'Ihesus hys wyld turnes no3t forgate [did not forget]; | He lepe [leapt] up & on þe son beme he sate' (ll. 2341–42). Without explicitly being encouraged to do so, the children try to imitate Jesus, but fall down dead. When their parents find out about this unfortunate occurrence and blame Jesus for injuring their children, he replies,

[...] gud men, speke no3t so gret;	[angrily]
Þai wald my dedes allway conterfett;	[wished to imitate]
Þat wroght þam all þis qwed. (ll. 2359–61)	[caused; misfortune]

The wonder-boy, who can defy gravity, heals these children so that his mother will not have to deal with the upheaval caused by their deaths. A little further

[130] John Chrysostom (d. 407) claimed, *pace* Nestorius, that 'the flesh [of Christ ...] was so thoroughly transformed by its union to God the Word that it enjoyed perfectly "every wisdom and grace" [...] from the first moment of its existence'. For Chrysostom, Christ's soul was always omniscient, and 'If Jesus progressed in any sense at all [...] it was by progressively manifesting the wisdom that filled his transformed human soul': *De fide orthodoxa*, III. 22, paraphrased by Madigan, *The Passions of Christ*, p. 28.

on in the narrative, Jesus leaps upon a sunbeam again, and actually encourages his playmates to do likewise (ll. 2401–12). In the version of this incident in the London Thornton Manuscript (BL, Add. MS 31042), a well-known Middle English miscellany, 'Jhesu loughe [laughed] and made hym playe [amused himself]', when he sees the other children fall down.[131] An element of sadism is surely operative here. The destruction occurs as a sort of game, for Jesus knows full well that he can bring his playmates back to life, being the Lord of both life and death. Thus, while Jesus may seem 'wanton' in a sadistic sense, the injuries or deaths he causes are temporary and, in addition, intended to teach his playmates a lesson. Recall the boyish behaviour of the child Cuthbert, who prided himself on being the king of the playground. Jesus acts in a similar manner by exhibiting his unique supernatural immunity from harm and scorning the boys' attempts to imitate him. Whereas little girls were able to join Catherine of Siena in her penitential practices, the Christ Child cannot be imitated by other children when, in the course of play, he whimsically decides to exercise his divine powers. Another point worth noting is that the Minnesota manuscript never describes the child Jesus praying, studying, or doing chores, activities which would have been appropriate for ordinary medieval children to imitate. In other words, for the children listening to (or reading?) the Middle English text, none of Jesus's actions are imitable, except for his overall pious compliance with his mother's will and the compassion he shows to the unfortunate on more than one occasion (for example, by healing a blind man and exorcizing devils from two men (ll. 2922–3012)).

The wilfulness of the boy Jesus also characterizes him as a 'wanton' child, in the sense of one that always wants to have his way rather than carry out the wishes or instructions of his elders. At one point, Joseph tells Jesus that it is time that he put aside his childish ways:

> 3ow erte xij 3ere ald, god wayte, [years; God knows]
> & drawes full fast to mans state, [manhood]
> Tyme war þi playes wer layd; [games were put aside]
> Fforþi do now no wanton dede [therefore]
> & put me on myne eld in drede [anxiety]
> & make þi moder yll payd. [displeased]
> Ihesus sayd þan Iosep unto,
> I wote my selfe best what I sall do. [know]
> He went oute þan & playd. (ll. 2380–88)

[131] 'Nachträge zu den Legenden', ed. by Horstmann, p. 333, l. 478.

Jesus then wanders about and meets a dyer, who wishes to take him on as his apprentice. The dyer's wife makes sure that Jesus realizes that his apprenticeship will entail giving up his carefree life of play outdoors:

> Scho sayd: swete son, withouten doute
> Þu may no3t now all day ryn oute
> & fro þi werk go lyghtly,
> Ffor þe bus besy be here at hame. [it behooves you to be busy]
> (ll. 2695–98)

The dyer tells Jesus to put three pieces of costly cloth into three separate vats so that they may be dyed different colours. But as soon as the man and his wife go out on an errand, Jesus throws all the cloth into one vessel, and then runs out to play:

> & sythen out all þe dore he 3ede; [afterwards; went]
> He bade no lenger in þat stede. [abided; place]
> Þe childer of þe strete out did he call
> & played þer with þm at þe bawll;
> Þai welterd all ars ouer hede. [rolled completely]
> (ll. 2717–21)

Jesus is portrayed here as a child who performs his chores sloppily and hastily so that he may go out and play a children's game. He serves as the boys' leader, rousing his playfellows like the child in the traditional nursery rhyme who calls out:

> Boys and girls come out to play,
> The moon doth shine as bright as day.
> Leave your supper and leave your sleep,
> And join your playfellows in the street.[132]

Meanwhile the dyer's wife is suspicious about their new apprentice, informing her husband that

> [...] 3e lefte at hame a wanton childe
> And lyghtly may 3e be begylede [easily; tricked]
> Yf 3e dwell fro hym lang. (ll. 2725–27)

Note that she explicitly calls Jesus a 'wanton' boy. When the dyer and his wife return home and see what Jesus has done, they are aghast, but Jesus appeases them when he pulls out the pieces of cloth, which miraculously have been dyed different colours. In a way, Jesus has beguiled them by performing a sort of magic trick that sets all things right.

[132] Opie and Opie, *Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes*, no. 75, p. 115.

The Christ Child continues wandering about, performing miracles for various people, and ends up in Jerusalem where he disputes with wise men about the law. When Mary and Joseph realize that their son has been gone a long time, they decide to go look for him and finally find him sitting among the learned doctors. This episode, as noted above, is inspired by the second chapter of Luke (42–52), but there are important differences between the canonical and apocryphal versions. Whereas in the Gospel of Luke the Holy Family go to the Temple together to celebrate the feast, the poem presents Jesus as a boy, verging on adolescence, roaming about on his own; his parents eventually decide to track him down. The author of MS Z depicts Jesus confounding the doctors by his knowledge, just as he stumped his schoolmasters previously, though he does so here in a 'gracius' manner:

> Ffor shame nerehand þer wytt þai loysed [they almost lost their wits]
> When ihesus answerde or apposede,
> So gracious was hys spekyng. (ll. 2899–2901)

As in the second chapter of Luke, the twelve-year-old Jesus in the Middle English poem explains his actions to his parents:

> He sayde: to seke me no3t 3ow nedes, [you have no need]
> Ffor wyt 3e wele in my fader dedes [know well that about my father's business]
> All way be me bus; [it behooves me always to be]
> & moder, 3e wot I am sent þerto. [you know]
> Mary sayd, at þi wyll ay yow do; [you always do your will]
> Bot now come forth with us. (ll. 2935–40)

Mary's statement that Jesus always does what he wants is a significant addition to the canonical text, for it emphasizes the poem's portrayal of Jesus as a wilful child. Moreover, Christ's statement that he must fulfill his Father's will takes on a special meaning in the context of stories about a child who continually disregards the will of his earthly father. Equivocation on Jesus's 'father' occurs earlier in the poem. When the Jews, having witnessed the miraculous powers of the Christ Child, ask Mary whether she is really his mother, 'ihesus sayd, bot my fader wyll ware [unless it was my Father's will], | Swylke werkes ne wroght I neuer mare [I would never have done such works]' (ll. 1870–71). Christ's reference to his heavenly Father is misunderstood by the Jews, who think that it must be Joseph's will that Jesus do such things. They continually blame Joseph, Jesus's putative father, for the boy's misdemeanours.[133]

[133] On the Middle English poems' equivocation on Jesus's 'father', see further Dzon, 'Joseph and the Amazing Christ Child'.

To sum up, the apocryphal Jesus can be called a 'wanton' boy for a number of reasons: he is unruly and unpredictable in his use of his divine power, unteachable and rather rude when handed over to teachers, and wilful about doing what he wants. Jesus is also 'wanton', like girls and boys (except for the saintly ones), by virtue of taking pleasure in play. Yet he often plays tricks in a clever manner, his cleverness not being what we would expect of a child. Taking pride in his uniqueness, he at times evinces a sadistic streak. The child Jesus thus bears some resemblance to Shakespeare's wanton boys in *King Lear*, but the fact that he often heals others softens this depiction and makes him seem playful, in the sense of taking pleasure in fun, rather like the wanton boy in Juliet's analogy.

Anti-Judaism and Incarnational Theology in MS Z822 N81

Although Jesus repeatedly restores order, his behaviour is not mere child's play without serious repercussions, such as that described earlier in a passage from *Ratis Raving*. This is to say that Joseph's continual foreboding that the Jews might dispose of such a troublesome child as Jesus is not simply paranoia on the part of an old man. In a question in the *Summa theologiae* in which he considers whether Christ himself ought to have made his birth known (3, q. 36, a. 4), Thomas Aquinas considers the argument (obj. 3) that the *Liber de infantia salvatoris* (i.e. the expanded Pseudo-Matthew) attributes miracles to the Christ Child, which implies that the Boy indeed publicized his divinity, so to speak. Deferring to the authority of Gratian's *Decretum*, Aquinas counters this argument by saying that the *Infantia salvatoris* is apocryphal.[134] He also relies upon the theological heavyweight John Chrysostom, who argues hypothetically that if Jesus had performed miracles as a boy, then the Jews around him, 'overcome by malice, would have handed him over to be crucified before the opportune time'.[135] It is possible

[134] Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 3, q. 36, a. 4 ad 3 (IV, 2649a). For the passage in the *Decretum*, see Gratian, *Decretum*, D. 15, c. 3, in *Corpus juris canonici*, cols 72–76; the *Liber de infantia Salvatoris* is mentioned in col. 73. For a translation, see Gratian, *The Treatise on Laws*, trans. by Thompson and Gordley, p. 57. The *Decretum* restates the warning against apocryphal books found in the early sixth-century Gelasian Decree. For the critical edition, see *Das Decretum Gelasianum*, ed. by Dobschütz, particularly p. 11. For a partial translation, see *The Apocryphal New Testament*, ed. and trans. by Elliott, pp. xxiii–xxv. While the Gelasian Decree sounds harsh and stern to modern ears, the *Glossa ordinaria* arguably implies that apocryphal books may be read in private. See *Corpus juris canonici*, D. 15 c. 3, col. 74. On this point, see further Dzon, 'Cecily Neville and the Apocryphal *Infantia salvatoris*'.

[135] '[...] ante opportunum tempus eum cruci tradidissent livore liquefacti': Aquinas, *Summa*

that the Middle English poets who recounted legends about Jesus's apocryphal childhood were aware of Aquinas's objections against them. The comic element they add to their narratives might have been intended to make their portrayal of Jewish hostility towards Jesus, which coincides with Aquinas's speculations concerning the *Infantia salvatoris*, seem less serious. While a sense of foreboding runs throughout these poems (a sense created by numerous references to danger menacing the wonder-boy, as well as his knowledge and prophecies of his future death),[136] an intended sense of darkness does not palpably pervade these stories — perhaps in part because, as a type of trickster, Jesus evades serious harm.

There is obviously a strongly anti-Judaic tone to the Minnesota poem, but its derogatory portrayal of and hostile stance towards the Jews is not unique to the anonymous poet. In this poem, a number of children and adults are amazed by Jesus's 'giftedness' and are grateful for the benefits that he has shown them. Indeed, the Jewish elders' ill will towards him may be owing, to a large extent, to the Boy's popularity. While the poem, especially in the latter part, tells how many people become Jesus's followers and profess belief in him as God's Son, a number of the Jewish elders are shown to be uncertain about who Jesus is. In the epilogue, the narrator hones in on the question of the Jews' understanding of who Jesus is when he remarks,

> Þus ihesus wroght on þis same wysse
> & also mad he mo maystryse [miracles]
> Emang þe Iewes so kene [hostile]
> Þat þai suld trow in hym yf þai wold [believe in him if they wished]
> & als god sone hym ken and holde [know and believe]
> For myracles þat were sene. (ll. 3445–50)

The poet here basically says that the Jews had plenty of evidence that the Christ Child was the Son of God.[137] Yet scripture suggests that Christ hid his divine

theologiae, 3, q. 36, a. 4, ad 3 (IV, 2649b). The subject of this sentence is unexpressed in Latin, but it is clear from the previous sentences that Aquinas means the 'Israelitae'. This statement about the Jews is repeated in Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 3, q. 43, a. 3, resp. (IV, 2695a). In both passages, Aquinas refers to homily 21 of John Chrysostom's commentary on the Gospel of John, where he remarks on Christ's first miracle, worked at the wedding feast at Cana (John 2. 11); for a translation, see Chrysostom, *Commentary on Saint John: Homilies*, trans. by Goggin, p. 206.

[136] In the poem in Minneapolis, Univ. of Minnesota, MS Z822 N81, the Christ Child refers to his future death in the following passages: ll. 2164–68; ll. 2441–48; ll. 2681–82; and ll. 2839–41.

[137] The poet here echoes a common sentiment among the Church Fathers; see, for example, Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, ed. by Slusser, chap. 69.6, p. 108.

power and wisdom during the early stage of his life by having had an ordinary childhood; this explains why people were confused when he began his public ministry and began to work miracles (cf. Matthew 13. 55: 'Is not this the carpenter's son?'). The Middle English poet challenges the general assumption that Christ's boyhood was ordinary, an idea strikingly exaggerated by the Franciscan author of the *Meditationes vitae Christi*, a widespread devotional text.[138] In the Middle English poet's view, the Holy Family's Jewish neighbours had tangible proof of Jesus's divinity before their very eyes when he was still a boy: the many miracles he worked in their presence. It is on account of the Jews' failure to assent to Jesus's divinity and their rejection of him and his family that the poet expects the Jews to be punished on Doomsday (ll. 3452–53).

While the narrator is quick to place blame upon the Jews, his account of Christ's childhood actually undermines his view that there was no way they could mistake who Jesus was. His portrayal of Jesus as a 'wanton' boy, at least in the eyes of his Jewish neighbours, implies that there was actually a major obstruction to the Jews' realization of Christ's true identity. The poem about Jesus's apocryphal childhood found in the London Thornton Manuscript captures this idea succinctly when it has one of Jesus's teachers exclaim: 'If it ne ware thi werkes wild [if it were not for your wild deeds], | I monde wene [would have thought] that thou it ware' — by 'it' he means the child whom David prophesied would be born of a maiden (cf. Isaiah 7. 14).[139]

In his epilogue, before closing with his harsh words about the Jews, the poet (of the text in MS Z) argues against certain curmudgeons who doubt the authenticity of his Latin source, which they consider 'apocryphal' ('apocrysome', l. 3428). He complains that, despite the apostolic origin of his text, some people refuse to take it seriously (ll. 3427–29). To the contrary, the poet asserts,

> [...] þer es nathyng done thynk me [it seems to me]
> Þat yt by possybylyte
> May be of gods wirkyng. (ll. 3430–32) [God's doing]

This argument that Christ, being God, could have done amazing things in his childhood that ordinary children, or for that matter, human beings in general, cannot do seems to have been fairly common in the later Middle Ages.[140]

[138] See *Meditaciones vitae Christi*, ed. by Stallings-Taney, chap. 15. The text has been attributed to Johannis de Caulibus, though the authorship is still unknown.

[139] 'Nachträge zu den Legenden', ed. by Horstmann, p. 333, l. 466. The word 'wanton' could easily be substituted for the word 'wild'; as we have seen, they were often paired alliteratively.

[140] A similar remark appears in William Caxton's 1447 printing of a Latin *Infantia Salvatoris*:

As far as I know, the other argument the poet offers in defence of his text is truly unique. The basic principle of this argument, which seeks to defend the portrayal of Jesus as a wanton boy, is that the Incarnation implies that Jesus must have been a real child and thus acted as children normally do:

& sen he become man for our gude	
& touke als we haue flessh & blude	
In mary mayden wemlesse,	[spotless]
Thurgh kynde of man þan burd hym nedes	[it necessarily behooved him]
In hys 3ong age do some child dedes	
Has saynt paule beres wytnesse.	
For þus he says & yt so betyd,	[it so happened]
When I was child, child dedes I dyd	
& als a child wyt es;	[in accordance with a child's understanding]
& when to man stat I was broght	[manhood]
I voyde my child dedes & þan wroght	[put aside]
Als a man dos neuerþelesse. (ll. 3433–44)	[as a man does]

In a similar way in which Bede quoted Saint Paul (1 Corinthians 13. 11) in the *vita* of Cuthbert in order to excuse the saint's boyhood playfulness, the author of MS Z quotes Paul to defend his portrayal of Jesus acting wantonly.[141] Elsewhere I have argued that the above passage may have been intended as a counter-argument to Aquinas's view that if Christ had worked miracles in his childhood, then the Jews (and those who came after them) would have thought that his Incarnation was a phantasm (that is, an illusion).[142] My reasoning is that the late medieval redactors

'Nec credantur esse minus vera que hic scripta sunt eo quod non sunt canonizata cum apud deum nichil est impossible. [...] Legant ergo et credant qui volunt', folio 18^{r} (Caxton, *Infantia salvatoris*, ed. by Holthausen, p. 22).

[141] Paul's remark about the differences between his previous existence as a boy and his adult self occurs just before his famous statement about now seeing in a glass darkly, but then face to face (1 Corinthians 13. 12). In his exegesis of this passage, Aquinas sees the relationship between childhood and adulthood as analogous to the difference between the imperfection of human knowledge in the present state and its perfection in future glory. He emphasizes that the very nature of a child is imperfection, which implies that adult behaviour cannot be expected of children. Aquinas, *Super epistolas S. Pauli lectura*, ed. by Cai, 1, 386–87. Aquinas's more naturalistic and neutral view of children may be contrasted with Augustine's pessimistic perspective on them as morally corrupt. On Aquinas's view of childhood, see further, Reynolds, 'Thomas Aquinas and the Paradigms of Childhood'.

[142] This idea is linked with his speculation concerning the Jews' being overcome by malice in the sight of a wonder-working Christ Child: 'Existimassent enim phantasma esse incarnationem' (Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 3, q. 36, a. 4, ad 3 (IV, 2649b)). Repeated in Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 3, q. 43, a. 3, resp. (IV, 2695a). See Dzon, *The Quest for the Childhood of Christ*.

and consumers of the apocryphal childhood legends would likely have regarded Jesus's behaviour, typical of ordinary children, as stemming from his childhood physiology, that is, his having had a real human body that developed over the course of the human life cycle, rather than only the appearance of human flesh.[143] In short, the Minnesota poet excuses Christ's wanton deeds by reminding his audience that boys have a peculiar nature.

The Apocryphal Poem in Context

Before concluding, I wish to briefly consider the broader question of the manuscript context of this unusual poem. The manuscript in which it is contained, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, MS Z822 N81, is the only one of the twenty-five surviving manuscripts with the Northern Homily Cycle (NHC) that also includes a poem devoted to Christ's apocryphal childhood (and Mary's birth and upbringing). The NHC consists of Middle English paraphrases of the Gospel readings for Sundays and certain feasts days, expositions of these readings, as well as exempla that illustrate some of the moral lessons that may be drawn from these readings — all of this in Middle English verse, arranged according to the calendar of the liturgical year.[144] What I would like to suggest here is that because the NHC is a compilation of canonical and 'fictional' material in verse it is not surprising that a scribe would think it fitting to append to it a poetic rendition of the apocryphal births and childhoods of Jesus and Mary, for these accounts similarly involve a fusion of canonical and legendary material.

It is worth asking who the scribe was who wrote out MS Z. J. Lawrence Mitchell notes that 'in a colophon [...] the scribe seems to offer a clue as to his identity: "*Sit nomen Domini benedictum. Ex hoc nunc et usque in eternum. Nomen scriptoris R.S. plenus amoris. Ecce quam bonum et quam iocundum habitare fratres in unum*" ("Blessed be the name of the Lord, now and forever. The writer's name is R.S., (who is) full of love. Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity").'[145] Since the poem seems to have been written in

[143] Dzon, 'Boys Will Be Boys'.

[144] For an overview, see Heffernan and Horner, 'The Northern Homily Cycle'. Anne B. Thompson's recent edition of the unexpanded NHC contains a little more than a third of the text's roughly twenty thousand lines of verse: *The Northern Homily Cycle*, ed. by Thompson, p. 12. Thompson describes the three recensions of the NHC and lists the manuscripts belonging to each one: ibid., pp. 4 and 14–15. For an edition of the expanded NHC, see *The Northern Homily Cycle*, ed. by Nevanlinna.

[145] This colophon, which quotes Psalm 132. 1, appears on folio 185^{r}, the folio that concludes

one hand,[146] it is safe to conclude that the person who hinted at his identity in the colophon was also the person who copied the poem about the childhood of Jesus. The self-referential piece of data provided in the colophon seems to indicate that the scribe was either a monk or a friar or some other cleric living within a religious community. I am inclined to think that he was a friar who added the legends of the childhood of Christ to a manuscript with the NHC as a way of enriching his compendium of preaching material with additional entertaining and pious stories. He was in any case a religious who had contact with the laity, probably through preaching.[147] Perhaps the scribe was one of those preaching friars, who, according to the fourteenth-century religious reformer John Wyclif, 'direct their attention to pleasing their audience with apocryphal poems, fables, and lies'.[148] The Dominican directly involved in the production of the Holkham Bible Picture Book (BL, Add. MS 47682), a few folios of which recount and illustrate apocryphal stories about Christ's childhood (fols 14^{r}–16^{r}), provides a precedent of a friar promoting apocryphal legends about the boy Jesus.[149]

What are we to surmise about the author of the Middle English poem on Christ's childhood found in MS Z and the (presumably like-minded) scribe who

the NHC section and precedes the Middle English poem on the childhood of Jesus. See Mitchell, 'A "Northern Homilies Cycle" Manuscript', p. 322. Scholars disagree about the second initial. Parker interpreted it as a 'G': *Middle English Stanzaic Versions of the Life of Saint Anne*, ed. by Parker, p. xxvi. Thomas J. Heffernan says that 'the initials R.S. [...] are almost certainly to be expanded to the name "R.[?] Stanndone"', and that 'plenus amoris' is a rhetorical tag: Heffernan, 'The Use of the Phrase *Plenus Amoris*', pp. 493, 494.

[146] Mitchell notes that the manuscript 'was written in brown ink by one hand throughout, although there appears to be a difference between the relatively neat work in the NHC and the more careless work of St. Anne, *bt* [the *vita* of Saint Bartholomew] and *ge* [the *vita* of Saint George]': Mitchell, 'A "Northern Homilies Cycle" Manuscript', p. 328.

[147] Thomas J. Heffernan, 'The Authorship of the "Northern Homily Cycle, argues that the author was an Augustinian Canon.

[148] From Wyclif, 'De fundatione sectarum', ed. by Buddensieg, I, 41. Wyclif complained that friars, by making use of rhymes and fables, 'adulterate the word of God in various ways': Wyclif, 'Exposicio textus Matthei XXIII', ed. by Loserth, p. 331. See further Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible*, p. 148 n. 4.

[149] Folio 1^{r} depicts a Dominican instructing the artist/scribe to do a good job in executing the manuscript, since it will be shown to 'a riche gent'. See further Kauffmann, 'Art and Popular Culture', pp. 46–47. Kauffman says that it is not surprising that a member of the Order of Preachers patronized this book since 'sermons [...] played the key role as purveyors of popular literature': ibid., pp. 62–63. Michelle P. Brown, however, holds that 'the prefatory miniature does not necessarily indicate that the book was commissioned by the Dominican friar depicted therein': *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, ed. by Brown, p. 16, and p. 4. See also *The Anglo-Norman Text of the Holkham Bible*, ed. by Pickering, pp. xviii–xix.

actually copied it into that manuscript? Did they envision a lay audience being entertained by (what were perceived of as) fanciful and quaint stories about Jesus's childhood and Mary's birth and upbringing? There is a good probability that a friar or some other religious who used the manuscript as a preacher's handbook transmitted episodes from the poem orally to the laity, especially considering that in length and in narrative detail the individual episodes about Christ's childhood are equivalent to exempla. Reidar Aasgaard has recently emphasized the strengths of the IGT as a narrative, going so far as to suggest that this apocryphal text was 'Christianity's first children's story'.[150] Although parents and children may have sometimes been the intended audiences for homilies based upon the childhood legends, I doubt that the primary purpose of reiterating apocryphal infancy legends was to entertain children in particular.[151] My overall sense from studying apocryphal infancy texts found in both Latin and Middle English manuscripts and the visual renderings of these apocryphal legends is that the late medieval Christians who transmitted and read and/or viewed the apocrypha were mainly interested in fostering and/or experiencing a sense of awe at Jesus's power and wisdom. In addition to underscoring the Christ Child's divinity, the apocryphal infancy legends offer proof, as it were, that Jesus was a real human child; they also explore the paradox of a child-God in a colourful, though unseemly way. For the author of the Englished Pseudo-Matthew in MS Z, as for the authors of other Middle English poems on Christ's childhood, reflection upon his real (not illusory) passage through the human life cycle constitutes a devotional exercise entailing both thought and feeling — this, despite the fact that the poem's depiction of Jesus as a 'wanton' boy generally strikes a modern audience as impious, comical, or both.

Although the late medieval redactor of the apocryphal infancy legends found in MS Z humanizes the Christ Child,[152] by portraying him, for example, sitting upon a sunbeam as if it were the branch of a tree, he does not seem concerned about making him a child whom the children of his own society could imitate.[153]

[150] See, in particular, Chapter 12 of Aasgaard, *The Childhood of Jesus*.

[151] Daniel T. Kline suggests a broad definition of children's literature as textual culture that may have been geared in part towards children. See the introduction to the anthology he edited: *Medieval Literature for Children*, ed. by Kline.

[152] The vernacular texts, it should be noted, seem to do this more blatantly than the Latin source-texts. Jesus, for example, is never called 'lascivus' in the late medieval Latin versions of Pseudo-Matthew, though his behaviour can still be characterized as 'playful', 'unruly', and 'ill-mannered'.

[153] A point made a number of years ago by Clark, 'The Fathers and the Children', p. 20.

In contrast, the pious girl Mary may have been intended as a model for young girls in a preacher's audience or within a household reading circle, as well as for professed religious (male or female) who lived according to a rule. In her discussion of courtesy texts and of biblical plays that feature the Virgin Mary, Kathleen M. Ashley argues that small details in these late medieval sources that alter the Lucan account of the Annunciation were intended to instil in young women a sense of reserve when dealing with men.[154] The apocryphal childhood of Jesus in MS Z cannot likewise be said to have served as a sort of courtesy text within fifteenth-century English culture. The 'wanton' behaviour that the Christ Child and other male children in the poem manifest is the very opposite of late medieval English *courtesie*, although Jesus graciously carries out his mother's wishes and shows mercy to others on a number of occasions.

Conclusion: Jesus Divine yet also a Child

The preternaturally pious boys and girls who populate hagiographical literature may be considered analogous to the apocryphal Christ Child in that all of them do and say things that ordinary children do not. During childhood, the saints transcend the human life cycle and present miniature versions of their future selves — *praesagia futurorum*, in the words of Raymond of Capua.[155] While their behaviour is extraordinarily pious, ordinary medieval children could nevertheless have imitated them to a certain extent. Recall that Catherine of Siena's playmates flagellated themselves under her direction. By having an awareness of his future Passion, the Christ Child in MS Z can be compared to the saints whose childhoods were overshadowed by their future adult sanctity. Yet whereas the apocryphal Jesus, for a long time an unruly child, seems to develop gradually into a more responsible young man, the saints who are already pious during their childhood are rather static in character.[156] A large portion of the poem in MS Z portrays

[154] Ashley, 'Medieval Courtesy Literature'. On virgin martyrs as role models for medieval maidens, see Lewis, 'Model Girls?'. Texts written for wives or maidens who will become wives are the female equivalent of courtesy texts aimed at young males, which I mention above. See, among others, Barnhouse, *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*; and Dronzek, 'Gendered Theories of Education'.

[155] Speaking of saints' lives, Giannarelli remarks that 'Possiamo interpretare questo elemento come esempio de *constantia* di atteggiamenti, ossia come equivalente cristiano del concetto classico di immutabilità del carattere': Giannarelli, 'Infanzia e santità', p. 35.

[156] While the Christ Child is shown to develop, the modern reader, I suspect, tends not to notice this at first, since Jesus's wanton works are much more interesting to hear about than his

Jesus, we might say, as a 'problem child', yet in the latter part of the poem, Christ devotes his efforts to bettering society (by healing, exorcizing, and feeding people, for example) and, when he is apparently still in his teens, he gradually transitions to being the beneficent Jesus of the Gospels.[157] Like Cuthbert (and Paul), Christ in MS Z was once a 'wanton' boy, yet whereas the Anglo-Saxon saint put aside his wanton ways abruptly, Jesus does so only after an extensive period of time.

As a divine being who, by demonstrating his humanity to those around him, prevents others from disbelieving in his Incarnation, the child Jesus does well to pass through the human life cycle at a relatively slow pace. J. A. Burrow summarizes the view of many patristic and medieval theologians on this topic when he states: 'Christ's double nature as both God and man required that he should be seen as somehow both fulfilling the natural order in his perfect humanity and also transcending it in his consummate Godhead.'[158] The idea of Jesus's once having been a 'wanton' boy provides the author of English Pseudo-Matthew in Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, MS Z822 N81 (as well as his readers) food for thought, a topic for meditation. Rather than being primarily entertaining or didactic (prescriptive or cautionary), the poem that focuses on the childhood of Jesus in this manuscript is, in my view, fundamentally devotional. Studying this poem not only provides insight into later medieval religiosity, particularly its interest in the paradoxical child-God; it also sheds light on medieval adults' perception of the typical behaviour of boys and girls, and their realization that proper conduct, at least in males, emerges only gradually.

good deeds. A similar point about Jesus's development has recently been made with regard to the IGT by Aasgaard, 'From Boy to Man in Antiquity'; and Davies, *The Infancy Gospels of Jesus*, pp. x and xxii.

[157] The last time that Jesus causes the deaths of his playmates is when he encourages them to leap onto a sunbeam (l. 2404). While some readers may consider Jesus responsible for the deaths of his playmates who, having gone to the woods with him, were slain by wild beasts, it should be noted that they disregarded his advice to stay beside him during their expedition (ll. 2497–2516). He resurrects all these children. After the latter incident, all the miracles Jesus works are beneficial to those around him.

[158] Burrow, *The Ages of Man*, pp. 135–36.

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Adolescence Uncloistered (Cluny, Early Twelfth Century)

Isabelle Cochelin

In the late sixties and early seventies of the twentieth century, some historians who were unafraid and even anxious to challenge old conceptions of the human life cycle claimed that the state of adolescence did not exist before the nineteenth century.[1] Such an allegation has since been rejected by most scholars, and I do not intend to assert in this article that adolescence as we know it today was invented in the early twelfth century. Rather, I believe that the perception and definition of adolescence are volatile. Depending on time and place, the few years immediately following puberty are most closely associated either with the age that precedes it (childhood) or the age that follows it (adulthood, maturity, or whatever one calls it). Also, depending on time and place, adolescence can be seen, or not, as an age of conflict.[2] Because of the mutability of the conception of adolescence (for specific groups, including scholars), it is worthwhile to observe how and, if possible, why such temporary shifts occur at a given time in a given community. In this article, I will study the changing images of adolescence as depicted by the Cluniacs from the tenth to the twelfth century.

[1] Philippe Ariès, as always the revolutionary, claimed that there was no adolescence before Wagner's *Siegfried*, if we ignore some early signs in the eighteenth century: Ariès, *L'Enfant et la vie familiale*, pp. 42–49. He was not the only one making such a statement in the late 1960s and early 1970s; see for example Demos and Demos, 'Special Section: History of the Family'.

[2] See Shanahan, 'Adolescence', p. 1. The classical reference on this topic, claiming that the rebellious adolescent was not to be found in all societies, is Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa*. For the Middle Ages, see Schultz, 'Medieval Adolescence'.

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Early in his abbacy, Peter the Venerable, the ninth Abbot of Cluny (1122–56), decided that young men aged between fifteen and nineteen should no longer be considered as adults, but identified as children.[3] His exact words were:

> It has been stated that absolutely no future monk should be clothed in regular clothes before the age of twenty, not even by special concession. The cause for this ruling is the too rapid admission of children. Before they possess any form of rational intelligence, they are vested with the clothes of the sacred religion and intermingle with the others, disrupting everybody with their inept puerilities.[4]

This statute can be interpreted variously. Most scholars have understood it to mean that no more individuals were accepted in the *ecclesia cluniacensis* (the family of Cluniac monasteries under the direction of the abbot of Cluny) before the age of twenty.[5] Indeed the new monastic foundations of the time, such as Grandmont and Chartreuse, were not admitting individuals below the age of twenty (fifteen at first for the Cistercians, and then eighteen by the later twelfth century); Peter might have decided to imitate them, in the context of a regular and sufficient influx of adult converts.[6]

[3] This article deals exclusively with men. Medieval women's life cycle was quite different, to the point that some scholars have questioned whether adolescence ever existed for them during the Middle Ages. See for instance Parsons, 'The Medieval Aristocratic Teenaged Female'; Innes, '"A Place of Discipline"', p. 66; Schultz, 'Medieval Adolescence', pp. 527–28; and for Byzantium, Hennessy, *Images of Children in Byzantium*, p. 3. For some nuances to this stern approach, but concerning the late Middle Ages, see also Chojnacki, 'Measuring Adulthood', pp. 375–76. Kim M. Phillips considers that medieval maidens had an adolescence but she equals the latter with youth as indicated by her index (Phillips, *Medieval Maidens*, p. 239). On medieval women's life cycle, see also Youngs's article in this volume.

[4] 'Statutum est, ut nullus etiam ex concessione futurus monachus regularibus usque ad viginti annos vestibus induatur. Causa instituti huius fuit, immatura nimisque celer infantum susceptio, qui antequam aliquid rationabilis intelligentiae habere possent, sacrae religionis vestibus induebantur, et admixti aliis puerilibus ineptiis omnes perturbabant': Peter the Venerable, *Statuta*, ed. by Constable, statute 36, pp. 70–71. On statutes in general, and more particularly Peter's statutes, see Melville, 'Action, Text, and Validity'.

[5] Such is the interpretation by some of the most important scholars in monastic studies: Knowles, 'The Reforming Decrees of Peter the Venerable', p. 11; Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century*, p. 100; Lynch, *Simoniacal Entry into Religious Life*, p. 39; Riché, 'L'Enfant dans la société monastique', p. 693; Deroux, *Les Origines de l'oblature bénédictine*, p. 45. However, we know that some oblates went on being accepted inside the *ecclesia cluniacensis* under Peter the Venerable (see notes 7, 69, and 70 below). Therefore I prefer to keep the interpretation of this statute open.

[6] On the refusal to admit children in the new orders, especially in Cîteaux, see Lynch, 'The Cistercians and Underage Novices'.

However, a different reading is possible. Peter could have instead required that individuals between the age of fifteen and nineteen remain in the *schola*, which segregated the children, rather than letting them join the adult monks as they used to do. Indeed, before this statute, the oblates were incorporated in the adult ranks through the rite of the profession at approximately the age of fifteen, as will be discussed below. The arguments in favour of this second reading of statute 36 can be summarized as follows: Firstly, Peter spoke a few times quite favourably of oblation in his collection of miracle tales, *De miraculis* (which he continued rewriting until the end of his life).[7] Secondly, statute 36 must be read in conjunction with the preceding statute. In 35, Peter asked that 'no-one be received as a Cluniac monk without the order or the permission of the abbot of Cluny'.[8] He was especially complaining about the too numerous receptions ('frequentissima [...] susceptio [...] iam fere maior numerus') of peasants, old men, children, and mentally handicapped individuals. If children were forbidden access to Cluniac monasteries in statute 36, then why ask in statute 35 that the permission of the abbot of Cluny be required to accept them? The change of vocabulary between the two statutes is also revealing. Statute 36 does not speak about reception (except in the title which is a later addition) but about being dressed up in the regular habit (*regulares vestes*) of a monk and mixing with others, which was only done at the time of the profession for the novices. Unlike the latter, the oblates were dressed like regular monks, but they were not 'intermingled' with the adult monks before their profession. One can make the claim that, by the end of the first quarter of the twelfth century, when adult newcomers had become the norm rather than the exception, the expression 'the taking of regular habit' referred to profession, whether or not a real change of clothes took place. Lastly, there is some indication that children were still being accepted in Cluniac houses later on. For instance, when Barthélémy de Floranges, abbot of Cluny, asked the subprior of La Charité-sur-Loire to excommunicate various revolted monks in his community in 1229, he specified that only the *pueri* of sixteen and above should suffer this punishment.[9] This meant that some *pueri* where younger; probably the

[7] Peter the Venerable, *De miraculis libri duo*, ed. by Bouthillier, II. 4 and 17 (oblation to the secular Church), as well as II. 29 (oblation to the Carthusians), and 31; see also notes 69 and 70 below.

[8] 'ut nullus in monachum Cluniacensem recipiatur absque Cluniacensis abbatis praecepto, vel permissione': Peter the Venerable, *Statuta*, ed. by Constable, statute 35, p. 69.

[9] *Recueil des chartes de l'abbaye de Cluny*, ed. by Bruel and Bernard, no. 4582; these charters can also be found online at *CCE: Cartae cluniacenses electronicae*, <http://www.unimuenster.de/Fruehmittelalter/Projekte/Cluny/CCE/Welcome.htm> [accessed 15 July 2012].

whole group called *pueri* corresponded to those less than twenty years old waiting for profession, in accordance with Peter's statute 36.

In either case — whether children and teenagers were no longer admitted inside the Cluniac houses, or the latter were pushed down into the *schola* — statute 36 is one of the signals of a new attitude towards the late 'teens' which became manifest, at least temporarily, in Cluny in the early twelfth century. The hypothesis discussed in this paper is that this new attitude illustrates one of the shifts in the conceptualization of adolescence that took place at diverse places and times in European history; although I deal here with the Cluniac microcosm, I will also point to the relevance of this phenomenon for the larger Church of the early twelfth century. In a nutshell, adolescents were presented as mere children at the same time as their voices were acknowledged, something which represented a noticeable change.

To substantiate this hypothesis I will look to begin with into the daily life of Cluniac teenagers prior to Peter's statute, in order to underline exactly what changes the latter represented. My main sources for this section are the Cluniac customaries, which describe the daily activities of the whole community in minute detail. Cluny, founded in 910 in Burgundy, grew exponentially in influence and wealth, especially from the late tenth century onwards under the rule of Odilo (994–1049) and his successors.[10] The main reason for its soaring growth and celebrity in the eleventh century was its way of life, described in detail in the customaries. Cluny remained the most important monastery of Europe until the 1130s or so, when it lost the status of the paradigmatic monastic community to the Cistercians. I will also show how the representation of the teenagers shifted radically in the Cluniac literature around the same period: while Peter's statute describes them being pushed down into the ranks of children, the hagiographical sources depict them, I would say, complementarily, speaking up against authority outside the monastery. This part of the research is based on Cluniac *Lives* of saints, describing exceptional but still human characters evolving from birth to death. I will end by discussing the definitions of the life cycle and their transformation in the early twelfth century, leaving space for more variations in the conception of *adolescentia*. Writers of the early and central Middle Ages rarely defined the life cycle, and to find such definitions it was necessary to venture outside the Cluniac microcosm. However my findings will substantiate what was said about Cluniac teenagers and point to how these changes might have been widespread inside the Church.

[10] On the history of Cluny, see most recently the first part of Iogna-Prat, *Ordonner et exclure*; English translation: Iogna-Prat, *Order and Exclusion*, trans. by Edwards.

Before looking at my three sub-topics, I must explain my idiosyncratic use of the terms teenagers, *adolescentia*, and adolescence. I voluntarily ignore the subtexts that might be associated today with the word 'teenager' and use it simply to designate individuals aged between fifteen (and not thirteen) and nineteen.[11] I make use of the Latin term *adolescentia* to refer specifically to medieval discourse; that is, *adolescentia* is whatever medieval women and men meant when they employed this term. Finally, when using the English words 'adolescent' and 'adolescence', I acknowledge the late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century (Anglophone) conceptions of this age group.[12] Like both definitions of *adolescentia* I will evoke in this paper, our idea of adolescence is the period that follows childhood and starts with puberty.[13] Unlike the medieval definition of *adolescentia* which saw it as an integral part of adulthood, however, ours comes before adulthood and is clearly distinguished from it.[14] Our adolescence is much closer to childhood, and is even for some considered the last stage of childhood. A clear illustration of this phenomenon is that, at least in the wealthier countries of

[11] See the amusing comments by Konrad Eisenbichler on the paradox of studying teenagers in the medieval context in his 'Introduction', in Eisenbichler, *The Premodern Teenager*, p. 1.

[12] My use of the plural refers to the variations in these conceptions of adolescence in such a large body as the Western world or even North America. On the possible differences in the perception of adolescence between North America and Europe, see Jackson and Goossens, *Handbook of Adolescent Development*, which attempts to complement the more numerous studies on North American adolescence, by discussing the European one. Like most psychological studies, it does not contain a historical section, but the editors note that the definition of adolescence might be changing, lasting longer than in the recent past; they even speak of the end of the twenties as a potential future upper limit (p. 2). This would mean a conception of adolescence which would be similar to the ones prevalent during most of the premodern times.

[13] Where there is definitely some disagreement among my contemporaries is on the age limits of adolescence. For instance, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, available online at <http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50002958?query_type=word&queryword=adolescent&first=1&max_to_show=10&single=1&sort_type=alpha> [accessed 16 July 2008], it spans from fourteen to twenty-five and is equivalent to youth, while the World Health Organization (WHO) proposes ten to nineteen for adolescence, fifteen to twenty-four for youth, and defines young people as the ones aged between ten and twenty-four: <http://www.un.org.in/Jinit/who.pdf> [accessed 16 July 2008]. Given that, in most contemporary definitions, adolescence starts with puberty, I would rather start it around twelve for girls and thirteen for boys and end it with the legal age of majority (between eighteen and twenty-one, depending on the country). Twelve to eighteen seems to have been the age limit of adolescence adopted by the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, a gigantic study started in the United States in 1993 (Jablonka, 'American Kids and Sex').

[14] See for instance Shanahan, 'Adolescence', p. 1.

today's world, the great majority of adolescents are almost completely economically dependent upon their parents. At the same time, we are ready to acknowledge some of their opposition to adults' control.

I will attempt to demonstrate in this article that the discourse on the Cluniac teenagers of the early twelfth century, unlike the one of the previous centuries, has some similarities with these contemporary discourses on adolescents: depending on the standpoint adopted, they were described as annoying children difficult to keep under control — as seen in Peter the Venerable's *Statuta* — or as individuals fighting against their (spiritual) parents' oppression in order to claim their own identity and choices, the discourse found in the *vitae*. These two images will be recognized by many as two sides of the same coin in the mainstream contemporary images of adolescents.[15]

Unlike today when age and birthdate are key information for functioning as a citizen within modern bureaucratic societies, in the Middle Ages these were not key ordering principles. One wonders, therefore, if the Cluniacs of the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries had such a clear knowledge of the child monks' dates of birth that they would have been able to determine with accuracy when they turned fifteen or twenty. This would make at first glance the Cluniacs a quite unusual group given that chronological age was rarely known with precision in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Their sources are not explicit on how they proceeded to determine the age of their oblates. I would like to offer two suggestions to explain their mathematical precision. First, while medieval people often did not keep track of their ages, parents probably had some sense of their children's number of years, at least during the first decade of their lives, as births were such formidable events in the premodern world.[16] One can then envisage

[15] In order to find a 'popular' summary of contemporary perception, I entered 'adolescents today' on Google, and my first reference was a link to an Australian article by an Adolescent psychologist: Carr-Gregg, 'The New Adolescent'. The imagined anecdote that starts this article points precisely to the issue of dependency and desire for self-affirmation in adolescents, possibly leading to open conflicts with parents. I agree with James A. Schultz, 'Medieval Adolescence', p. 521, that it does not mean that most of today's adolescents are rebellious. However a minority do revolt, and the presence of the theme of adolescent rebelliousness in contemporary articles, novels, and movies (as he points out) and in twelfth-century Cluniac hagiography (as I attempt to demonstrate in this article) serves and served probably the young ones to obtain a better sense of their own identity and accept their future.

[16] Youngs, *The Life Cycle*, p. 16, and more generally on the knowledge of the chronological age, pp. 12–17. Lett, *L'Enfant des miracles*, pp. 19 and 35, points to the fact that, far more often, the age of a child who benefited from a miracle is given (36 per cent), while it is rare for an adult (3 per cent); however this discrepancy can also be explained by other factors, such as the huge

that they tended to transmit this information to the monks when giving them one of their offspring. Second, Cluniac customaries indicate that physical criteria signalling puberty were observed on children's bodies.[17] Quite possibly, these physical changes determined what was called the age of fifteen as well as or even more so than the chronological age per se, and the age of twenty was counted in relation to the previous age, with a simple addition of five years (or whatever it took for the teen to act with maturity). This idea fits with what Deborah Youngs has noted more generally about how the medieval Church 'differed from secular authorities in never demanding proof of a person's age. Candidates presented for the priesthood (with a minimum age of twenty-four) would have their maturity judged on their appearance and mental capacity rather than any written proof'.[18] In other words, physical and cognitive ages were most important for the medieval Church. Thus I would infer that the Cluniacs considered each case separately, reaching a conclusion on when a boy had reached the limit of fifteen (or twenty) based on the observation of his cognitive, chronological, and physical ages.[19] However, the cognitive age was obviously not the predominant criteria for Cluniacs, otherwise Peter the Venerable would have had no need to change the age limits for profession.

differences between the behaviour of a two-year-old and that of a five-year-old, while the fact that an adult is thirty or forty is usually very secondary to a miracle tale.

[17] When discussing who among the *iuuenes* should be kept under surveillance by individual guardians in Cluny (*c.* 1080), Udalrich of Zell differentiates between the voluntary convert, even if he is still beardless (*imberbis*), and the oblate having already reached physically, but not mentally, the age of virility (*aetas virilis*). The role of the guardian is discussed just below. On the meaning of *iuuenis*, to be understood here as *adolescens* (someone aged fourteen/fifteen and above), see the last section of this article. I read Udalrich's *aetas uirilis* as meaning the age following puberty, i.e. after approximately fourteen/fifteen. 'Frater qui est hujus aetatis ut adhuc sit imberbis, etsi ultro saeculo renuntiaverit, et optimae sit opinionis, minime tamen custodia caret. Sed et aliquando illi maxime qui nutriti sunt in monasterio, si in moribus viri esse noluerint, virilis aetas nihil eis profuerit ut a custodia solvantur': Udalrich of Zell, *Antiquiores consuetudines Cluniacensis Monasterii*, ed. by Migne, cols 747–48.

[18] Youngs, *The Life Cycle*, p. 16. See also Metz, 'L'Enfant dans le droit canonique médiéval', pp. 9–12 and 32–58. This last author speaks about twenty-five, and not twenty-four, as the minimum age for becoming a deacon and a priest (pp. 32 and 49). Romans also ended the childhood of each male (with the acquisition of the *toga virilis*) some time between fourteen and sixteen, depending on each child and circumstances, but it was only at twenty-five that full adulthood was said to be reached. See Lawrence, 'Metaphors, Monuments and Texts', p. 444.

[19] On these three ages, see for instance Frenkel, 'Adolescence in Jewish Medieval Society under Islam', p. 268.

Four Cluniac customaries have survived oblivion. The oldest, the *consuetudines antiquiores*, dates from the late tenth century, or the very early eleventh at the latest.[20] The second, named the *Liber tramitis*, was mostly written during the second quarter of the eleventh century.[21] The third was composed by Udalrich of Zell around 1080, and the last by Bernard of Cluny shortly afterwards.[22] The latter was written in Cluny by a Cluniac for newcomers in Cluny, but the three others have to be used with care. They had been written for other institutions. These monasteries were desirous to know the Cluniac way of life to improve their own, but many factors could have distorted the portrait they kept of the Burgundian monastery: ignorance, misunderstandings, the author's own agenda, or a straightforward desire of the recipient houses to describe their own modus vivendi on certain matters.[23] This said, on the issue of adolescence, the four customaries do not seem to offer conflicting information.

In the four Cluniac customaries, we learn about the various age groups inside the cloister. The most conspicuous one was the group of the oblates, the children given to the monastery by their parents.[24] These children did not have the option of rejecting their parents' decision and leaving the monastery.[25] Therefore, around the age of fifteen and once the abbot had decided that it was the appropriate time, they did their profession and were thereafter added to the ranks of the adult monks.[26] Before this ceremony, even though they shared most of the

[20] *Consuetudines Cluniacensium antiquiores*, ed. by Hallinger, pp. 3–233.

[21] *Liber tramitis aeui Odilonis abbatis*, ed. by Dinter.

[22] Udalrich of Zell, *Antiquiores consuetudines Cluniacensis Monasterii*, ed. by Migne; Bernard of Cluny, 'Ordo cluniacensis', ed. by Herrgott.

[23] On the four Cluniac customaries, see most recently Cochelin, 'Évolution des coutumiers monastiques'.

[24] On the children in Cluny, see most recently Boynton and Cochelin, 'The Sociomusical Role of Child Oblates at the Abbey of Cluny'.

[25] The charter depicting their oblation was extremely clear on that topic: 'ut ab hac die non liceat illi collum de sub iugo regulae excutere, sed magis eiusdem regulae fideliter se cognoscat instituta seruare et domino cum caeteris gratanti animo militare' (*Liber tramitis aeui Odilonis abbatis*, ed. by Dinter, pp. 227–28). There were some exceptions to this rule, as can be inferred from few Cluniac charters; see *Recueil des chartes de l'abbaye de Cluny*, ed. by Bruel and Bernard, nos 3021 and 3574, dating from Hugh of Semur's abbacy (1049–1109). The most important study on oblation is by de Jong, *In Samuel's Image*.

[26] Udalrich of Zell, not much later copied by Bernard, wrote that the profession of an oblate took place at the legitimate age, which is fifteen, if not later: 'et de caetero benedictio ejus differtur usque ad legitimam aetatem, id est, si non amplius, vel usque ad quindecim annos aetatis. Rursus D. abbas cum voluerit eum benedicere, refert hoc fratribus in capitulo, et ipse

activities of the adults, they formed a clearly distinct group and were not mixed within the ranks of the professed. I will give three examples of how this complex phenomenon of inclusion and separation operated. The *Liber tramitis* is unusually detailed regarding the ordering of the various Cluniac processions, revealing that the *infantes* were always present but were kept systematically separated from the other monks, normally going first or last.[27] During meals, the *pueri* were present with the adults in the refectory, but they did not sit along the walls like the others; rather they ate standing up on the other side of the table, facing a brother chosen with care.[28] During the chapter (the daily meeting to discuss one chapter of the rule of Saint Benedict, the faults of the brethren, and the administration of the monastery), oblates were present but not allowed to speak, which meant that they could not denounce any adult. Children had their own little chapter during which they learned to accuse each other of their faults.[29] All this would change after profession and the subsequent admission literally and figuratively into the ranks of the adults at fifteen.

The lives of the teenager monks in Cluny were not immediately the same as those of their elders. For some time — possibly a year — each teenager had a guardian specifically assigned to him who would go with him everywhere, day and night. His bed would be placed next to the young monk's. When moving

juvenis statim veniam petit' (Udalrich of Zell, *Antiquiores consuetudines Cluniacensis Monasterii*, ed. by Migne, col. 742, and Bernard of Cluny, 'Ordo cluniacensis', ed. by Herrgott, p. 201).

[27] As can be seen for instance during the procession for the Nativity: *Liber tramitis aeui Odilonis abbatis*, ed. by Dinter, p. 23.

[28] No customary ever spelled out the custom of children standing up during a meal. This is probably due to the fact that it was a common practice, not specific to Cluny, so it did not need to be detailed. We learn about it indirectly, when Peter the Venerable ordered its discontinuation, specifying that it was an old custom (Peter the Venerable, *Statuta*, ed. by Constable, statute 56, p. 85). However, the *Liber tramitis* mentions children's *trunci* in the refectory (*Liber tramitis aeui Odilonis abbatis*, ed. by Dinter, p. 222). On the fact that children had to eat facing a serious monk who would denounce their wrongdoings, see Udalrich of Zell, *Antiquiores consuetudines Cluniacensis Monasterii*, ed. by Migne, col. 744, and Bernard of Cluny, 'Ordo cluniacensis', ed. by Herrgott, p. 207.

[29] The position of the oblates in the adult chapter is probably what was later called *vox passiva Capituli*: Benedict of Nursia, *Regula sanctissimi Patris Benedicti*, pp. 30–31. On the children's chapter, see for instance *Consuetudines Cluniacensium antiquiores*, ed. by Hallinger, p. 12; *Liber tramitis aeui Odilonis abbatis*, ed. by Dinter, p. 13; Udalrich of Zell, *Antiquiores consuetudines Cluniacensis Monasterii*, ed. by Migne, col. 744; and Bernard of Cluny, 'Ordo cluniacensis', ed. by Herrgott, p. 207. More generally on this issue, see Cochelin, 'Enfants, jeunes et vieux au monastère', pp. 232–35.

around the abbey at night, the teenager had to hold a candle. His interaction with children or other teenagers, especially physical contact, was strictly forbidden. This modus vivendi illustrates the extreme care taken by the Cluniacs in order to preserve their monastery from any sexual pollution and gives an insight of the manner by which the libido of the young pubescent monks was controlled, if not definitively crushed.[30] But these practices do not signify that the adulthood of these teenagers was questioned. Except for the presence of their guardians, they acted in every other aspect of their lives as adults: they moved with the other adults in procession, sat along the wall in the refectory, sat with the other adults in the choir, and, very importantly, had the right to speak up in the chapter. In the first half of the twelfth century, however, Peter's statute denied adulthood with all its honours and privileges to these fifteen- to nineteen-year-olds. How did such a change happen?

Fiona Stoertz has recently proposed that suspicion towards adolescents was specific to Cluny and only developed between the redaction of the first and the second customary, in the first half of the eleventh century.[31] It was later adopted by other monasteries in the second half of the eleventh century and marks a new conception of adolescence in Western monasticism, which is one of suspicion towards its potential sexual sinfulness. I agree that Cluniacs' provisions towards the teenagers in the eleventh century (as found in the *Liber tramitis*, the second customary, and the later two customaries) had less to do with their possible childish behaviour disrupting the life of their elders, later stigmatized by Peter, than with their puberty and newly awakened sexuality. However I am not convinced that one can already speak of a transformation of the perception of *adolescentia*.

Indeed, there is no echo of such an evolution in mid-eleventh-century Cluniac hagiography. Moreover the sexual problems represented by the presence of pubescent boys in a given group had been noted earlier on. Odo of Cluny had mentioned them, for instance, in his *Vita Geraldi* of the early tenth century.[32]

[30] On the association between lust and adolescence, see Stoertz, 'Sex and the Medieval Adolescent'. However, I would made a slight caveat: the greatest sexual fear of Cluniacs did not centre on the adolescents but on the children, conceived as potential objects of desire, and the greatest change in monastic recruitment in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries is less the refusal to admit adolescents than the progressive abandonment of oblation, due to the increase in adult converts. On the *adulescentes sub custodia* and the peculiar practices regarding the restraint of adolescents' libido in Cluny and other monasteries, see Cochelin, 'Le Dur apprentissage de la virginité'. On the issue of oblates and sexual misconduct, see also Frantzen, 'Where the Boys Are'.

[31] Stoertz, 'Adolescence and Authority'.

[32] Odo of Cluny, *De vita sancti Geraldi Auriliacensis*, ed. by Migne, col. 652; Odo of Cluny,

Furthermore, in his ninth-century commentary of the rule of Saint Benedict, Hildemar of Civate had already described measures similar to the later Cluniac ones to keep the teenagers' libido under check in his monastery.[33] They are simply indicative of monasteries paying very close attention to sexual purity inside their walls. This said, I believe that Fiona Stoertz's thesis and mine are perfectly compatible. While from the second quarter of the eleventh century onwards (in a pre–'Gregorian' reform world that was more and more obsessed with sexual purity), Cluniac efforts to curb the sexuality of adolescent members of their communities were finally deemed worthy to be described in the *Liber tramitis*, it is only by the early twelfth century that adolescents were paid enough attention to be rejected from the ranks of the adults.[34]

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The various Cluniac hagiographical sources written between the early tenth and mid-twelfth centuries give us another standpoint from which to study the evolving perception of the Cluniac *adolescentia*. It offers the possibility to contextualize Peter's decision, at least regarding Cluniac ideals. Given that one can debate at length on who was a Cluniac and who was not, I chose to consider first and foremost the seventeen *vitae* of Cluniac abbots, which were (obviously) known by the Cluniac monks and most often written for them and by them. None exist for Berno (d. 927), but Odo (d. 942) benefited from four. His disciple John of Salerno wrote the first one in the year following his death.[35] Even though it was conceived to help the Roman John present himself to his new brothers in Salerno, it was known in Cluny. Indeed, it was later abbreviated, most probably by a Cluniac monk.[36] The date of redaction of this abbreviated text is unknown,

The Life of St. Gerald of Aurillac, trans. by Sitwell, p. 109. On this passage, see Carozzi, 'De l'enfance à la maturité', p. 106. More generally, on Odo's purpose when writing this *vita*, see Cochelin, 'Quête de liberté et récriture des origines'.

[33] Hildemar, *Expositio regulae*, ed. by Mittermüller, p. 582. Nowhere in the Cluniac sources is the length of this strict surveillance over the teenagers specified. My proposition that it might have lasted a year is based on Hildemar's comment.

[34] On sexual purity around the time of the Gregorian reform, see for example Remensnyder, 'Pollution, Purity, and Peace', and the articles in the third part of the book edited by Frassetto, *Medieval Purity and Piety*.

[35] *BHL* 6292–96: John of Salerno, *Vita sancti Odonis*, ed. by Migne; John of Salerno, *The Life of Saint Odo*, trans. by Sitwell.

[36] *BHL* 6297: 'L'*Editio minor* della "*Vita*" di Oddone di Cluny', ed. by Fini. This text might well have been written soon after John's, given that it contains a piece of intimate information on Odo absent from the previous *vita*, the name of Odo's mother (ibid., p. 210n.).

except that at some point during the abbacy of Hugh of Semur (1049–1109) another anonymous monk — nicknamed *Humillimus* because of his use of this adjective in his prologue — expanded it.[37] In the early 1120s, the Cluniac monk Nalgod completely rewrote, one last time, the first *vita*.[38] Odo was succeeded by Abbot Aymard (d. 965), of whom little is known and no *Life* ever existed or survived. The life of the following abbot, Mayeul (d. 994), was celebrated in five *vitae*. The first one was written soon after his death, maybe from Pavia or Souvigny, in a monastery pertaining to the *ecclesia cluniacensis*.[39] The second was composed by a Cluniac monk named Syrus who wrote between 999 and 1010.[40] The third was the work of Mayeul's successor, Odilo, in 1031 or 1033.[41] Here again, Nalgod wrote his own version in early 1120.[42] Around the same time, another Cluniac monk thought it useful to present his own tale of Mayeul's life.[43] Odilo (d. 1049) is celebrated in two *vitae*, the first one by the Cluniac monk Jotsald, written during the first half of 1052 (but reworked and shortened for a Cluniac audience between 1055 and 1060), and the second one by the famous (non-Cluniac) Peter Damian, at the demand of Abbot Hugh (d. 1109), in 1063.[44] At last, the latter was praised through six *vitae*: three were written in succession between 1120 and 1122, one by the Cluniac monk Gilo, another by the Bishop of Le Mans, Hildebert of Lavardin, and the third by another Cluniac monk, Hugh of Gournay.[45] Not much later, between 1121 and 1128, Renald,

[37] *BHL* 6298: 'L'*Editio minor* della "*Vita*" di Oddone di Cluny', ed. by Fini.

[38] *BHL* 6299: for some sections found in the oldest manuscript, see Fini, 'Studi sulla *Vita Odonis reformata* di Nagoldo'; for the other sections, see Nalgod, *Vita Odonis*, ed. by Migne.

[39] *BHL* 5180: *Vita sancti ac venerabilis Maioli*, ed. Marrier and Duchesne, in *Bibliotheca Cluniacensis* can now be found on two websites: *Gallica: Bibliothèque Numérique*, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k1086219.zoom.f1.pagination> [accessed 15 July 2012], and the extremely useful website for anyone working on Cluny, provided by Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität, *Die Urkunden des Klosters Cluny* <http://www.uni-muenster.de/Fruehmittelalter/Projekte/Cluny/> [accessed 15 July 2012].

[40] *BHL* 5179: *Agni immaculate*, ed. by Iogna-Prat, pp. 163–285.

[41] *BHL* 5182–84: Odilo of Cluny, *Vita beati Maioli abbatis*, ed. by Migne; Odilo of Cluny, 'A Mirror for Monks', trans. by Dutton.

[42] *BHL* 5181: Nalgod, *Vita ex prolixioribus coaevorum actis*, ed. by Henschen and Van Papenbroeck.

[43] *BHL* 5185: *Altera eiusdem beati Maioli*, ed. by Marrier and Duschesne.

[44] Respectively *BHL* 6281 and *BHL* 6282. *BHL* 6281: Jotsald of Saint-Claude, *Vita Odilonis*, ed. by Staub. *BHL* 6282: Peter Damian, *Vita sancti Odilonis*, ed. by Migne.

[45] Respectively *BHL* 4007, 4010, and 4011–12a. *BHL* 4007: Gilo of Toucy, *Vita Hugonis*

abbot of Vezelay and future archbishop of Lyon, wrote two *vitae* to celebrate his great-uncle Hugh, one in prose and the other in verse.[46] Finally, sometime in the twelfth century, an anonymous monk rewrote the previous texts.[47] To this list can be added two *vitae* written by Abbot Odo between the late 920s and his death in 942, one of Gregory, bishop of Tours (d. 594), and the other of Gerald, count of Aurillac (d. 909), and one book of miracles composed and reworked by Peter the Venerable between 1127 and his death in 1156.[48] In total, twenty hagiographical sources will be considered, written over slightly more than two hundred years, with exactly half of them written after 1120. I will discuss what these texts can tell us about the end of childhood and about the interactions of teenagers with the monastic authorities.

For the hagiographers, the passage from *pueritia* to *adolescentia* was so significant in the life of their saints that almost all mention it.[49] In the *Vita Gregorii* for instance, Odo evokes Gregory's adolescence as a radical turning point, marked by the growth of his body and mind, but also by his decision to enter the Church.[50]

abbatis, ed. by Cowdrey. *BHL* 4010: Hildebert of Lavardin, *Vita sancti Hugonis abbatis*, ed. by Migne. *BHL* 4011–12a: Hugh of Gournay, *Epistola de vita S. Hugonis Cluniacensis abbatis*, ed. by Cowdrey, and Hugh of Gournay, *Vita S. Hugonis Cluniacensis abbatis*, ed. by Cowdrey.

[46] *BHL* 4008 and 4009: Renald of Vézelay, 'Vies de saint Hugues de Cluny par l'abbé Renaud de Vézelay', ed. by Huygens, pp. 35–60 (*vita* in prose) and 61–67 (*vita* in verse).

[47] *BHL* 4013: *Vita sancti Hugonis*, ed. by Marrier and Duchesne. On the date of this text, and more generally on the sources for the *Life* of Hugh of Semur, see Kohnle, *Abt Hugo von Cluny*, pp. 250–67.

[48] *BHL* 3682: Odo of Cluny, *Vita sancti Gregorii episcopi Turonensis*, ed. by Migne. On the fact that this *Vita* was the work of Odo, the second abbot of Cluny, see Rosé, 'La *Vita Gregorii Turnonensis* d'Odon de Cluny'. However one should note that this author does not consider this text as Cluniac, given that Odo was then occupied in Tours, where he died (ibid., pp. 246–47). *BHL* 3411: Odo of Cluny, *De vita sancti Geraldi Auriliacensis*, ed. by Migne, cols 639–703; Odo of Cluny, *The Life of St. Gerald of Aurillac*, trans. by Sitwell, pp. 90–180. Peter the Venerable, *De miraculis libri duo*, ed. by Bouthillier.

[49] Sally Crawford, who studied Anglo-Saxon sources, has noticed a similar threshold in her hagiographical sources: 'For many of the saints, the most significant transitional point in their lives came around the time of puberty, from thirteen to fifteen years of age, but their entry into their final adult role might be delayed into their mid-twenties or later' (Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 55).

[50] The section discussing Gregory's entrance into the Church starts with a clear reference to the fact that he had just entered adolescence: 'Adhuc itaque laicus, tam sensus quam corpora adoleverat' (Odo of Cluny, *Vita sancti Gregorii episcopi Turonensis*, ed. by Migne, col. 118). Odo had already mentioned this correlation between adolescence and entrance into the Church at the beginning of his summary of Gregory's *Life*: 'et quia jugum Domini ab adolescentia portavit' (col. 116).

The same Odo is made to speak in the first person singular in his own *vita* written by John of Salerno. His entry into adolescence was marked by the reverse phenomenon: his father decided to withdraw him from preparation to the clerical life and have him start a military training: 'But it happened that as I grew to be a youth (*cum adolevissem*), he whom you now see elderly and ill-favoured, was proclaimed a vigorous and good-looking young man (*strenuum* [...] *et conspicabilem juvenem*), and as time went on my father began to withdraw me from the ecclesiastical life and to set me to military exercises.'[51] In the early twelfth century, Nalgod slightly rephrased the beginning of this sentence, underlining even better Odo's passage from *pueritia* to *adolescentia* at the time when his father took the momentous decision ('Emenso pueritie spacio, cum in pleniorem adolescentie gratiam formaretur ...').[52] Mayeul's hagiographers mention the same turning point in their saint's life. Syrus speaks for instance of *pueritia* having run its course and *adolescentia* reclaiming the saint for itself ('Processu vero temporis decursa pueritia, cum eum iam sibi uindicaret adolescentia'). Similar formulations can be found in Odilo's two *lives*. The only saint whose entrance into adolescence is not clearly underlined by his hagiographers is Hugh of Semur, Cluny's sixth abbot. However, all his *vitae* date from the 1120s onward, at a time when, as this article attempts to demonstrate, the fifteen-years-old puberty threshold had become less significant. Another explanation for this silence might reside in the particularities of Hugh's biography. The authors did not need to mention this turning point in his life as it corresponded to Hugh's departure from lay life and his rejection of parental obedience to enter Cluny. Indirectly, we learn that this radical conversion took place while he was fifteen, *ab adolescentia*.[53] But in the description of his first years, the story of his conversion eclipsed the evocation of any physical change.

The significance given to the transition from childhood into *adolescentia* in the Cluniac *vitae* validates my claim that puberty was initially conceived as a fundamental threshold for the Cluniacs. As we have seen, up to the early twelfth century, it meant for the monk admission into adulthood, a change epitomized by profession. However, intriguingly at first glance, a correlate to this early admit-

[51] John of Salerno, *The Life of Saint Odo*, trans. by Sitwell, p. 9 (John of Salerno, *Vita sancti Odonis*, ed. by Migne, col. 47).

[52] 'L'*Editio minor* della "*Vita*" di Oddone di Cluny', ed. by Fini, p. 134, and Nalgod, *Vita Odonis*, ed. by Migne, col. 87.

[53] While Hugh of Gournay explains in the conclusion of his work that Hugh was fifteen at the time of his entrance into Cluny (Hugh of Gournay, *Vita S. Hugonis Cluniacensis abbatis*, ed. by Cowdrey, p. 139), Gilo of Toucy explained in his introduction that he converted *ab adolescentia* (Gilo of Toucy, *Vita Hugonis abbatis*, ed. by Cowdrey, p. 49).

tance into adulthood was the fact that these first years of life, even the ones after having passed the entrance into adulthood, were marked by submissiveness. Until the late eleventh century, whether children or young adults, all the saints are pictured as passive and compliant: they are dutiful sons and daughters up to the death of their parents, or, if they have been given to the monastery as oblates, dutiful *iuniores* respecting Benedict's instruction to honour one's elders ('seniores uenerare, iuniores diligere').[54] Prior to the twelfth century, the only teenager who is not depicted as a dutiful son, but as a fully fledged individual taking his future into his hands, is Mayeul of Cluny. However, this is easily understandable given that he was an orphan: deprived of parents, he could be presented by his hagiographers as left to decide for himself. I should underline that he is not depicted clashing with elders, but simply as the one who had decided on his own to enter the monastery. This independent act seems less revolutionary considering that he was destined to the religious life from infancy, and also given his family's interest in the Mâconnais; his decision to enter Cluny might have been planned for a long time.[55] For the others, in the pre-1120s hagiographical texts, there is no hint of revolt or self-determination; the possibility of a teenager taking his future into his own hands is simply not envisaged.

The *Vita Gregorii* offers a slight but noteworthy variation on this theme. The story of Gregory's conversion is based on the Bishop of Tours's own tale of this event in his *Vita Patrum*. Both the original and Odo's revisions of this story welcome analysis. In the former, an extremely sick adolescent Gregory asked twice to be brought to the church housing the relics of Saint Illidius. The first time, nothing happened. Prior to the second time, his mother expressed her sadness due to her son's terrible sickness, but he reassured her, answering that she will soon be happy and he cured due to Illidius's intervention ('Credo enim, et fides mea est, quod virtus eius et tibi laetitiam et mihi tribuat sospitatem'). Once in the church, he made the promise to become a cleric if cured, and his health was thereafter quickly restored.[56] Therefore,

[54] Benedict of Nursia, *Regula Benedicti*, ed. by de Vogüé, 4. 70–71; English translation: Benedict of Nursia, *RB 1980: The Rule of St. Benedict*, ed. by Fry, p. 29. Schultz, 'Medieval Adolescence', pp. 522–23 and 536, who claims that there was no adolescence in Medieval High German texts, insists also on the fundamental importance of obedience to parents in his sources.

[55] Iogna-Prat, 'Saint Maïeul de Cluny le Provençal entre histoire et légende', pp. 7–10. On the fact that Mayeul was given a clerical education since childhood, see for instance Odilo of Cluny, *Vita beati Maioli abbatis*, ed. by Migne, cols 947–48: 'Procedente pueritiae tempore, addictus est ecclesiasticis studiis, ut imbueretur litteris spiritualibus' (Odilo of Cluny, 'A Mirror for Monks', trans. by Dutton, p. 253).

[56] Gregory of Tours, *De vita Patrum*, ed. by Krusch and Levison, II. 2, p. 670; English

in his own autobiographical late sixth-century tale, the adolescent Gregory is depicted as the sole individual responsible for his conversion. He is represented as having made the decision alone, without outside interference. Odo transformed the story to make Gregory's conversion instead the consequence of the Heavenly Father's election and his parents' desire, not the result of an adolescent's wish. Because during his childhood the *puer* Gregory had twice miraculously cured his father on the basis of a vision, his parents understood that he was destined to become a cleric.[57] The double miracle comes from Gregory's own quill, but the parental decision is Odo's own claim.[58] However, the parents chose to postpone his tonsure, in order to obtain his agreement (*assensus*); Odo admits that he is uncertain about this last claim and adds 'I suppose' (*ut reor*). Moreover, in Odo's tale, the mother no longer expresses her sadness at her son's terrible sickness; we are simply told that Gregory promised to bring joy to those mourning his suffering and health to himself ('fides mea est, quod et mihi sospitatem et vobis mox praestabit laetitiam').[59] Therefore, *laetitia* could have here a double meaning: joy for the regained health of the adolescent and joy for his agreement to conform to his parents' wishes that he enter the Church.

Another example of the passivity ascribed to adolescents by the Cluniac hagiographers is to be found in the *Life* of Odo of Cluny, written in 943, a few months after his death. There is no source of information on Odo's childhood and youth outside of this hagiographical text, with only the minor exception of what Odo wrote himself about the same stages in the *Life* of another saint, Gerald of Aurillac, whom he had never met.[60] By contrast, John might have produced a relatively faithful account of Odo's early life, considering that during the three years he spent with him, Odo spoke about his past.[61] Because of the paucity of sources, it is necessary to read between the lines of these two texts in order to understand how childhood and youth were spent by Odo, and perceived by both himself and John. Soon after Odo's birth, his father promised him to Saint Martin, and thus dedicated him to the Church. In hagiographical language, such an offering was

translation: Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers*, trans. by James, II. 2, pp. 37–38. On Odo's sources for this *Vita*, see Rosé, 'La *Vita Gregorii Turnonensis* d'Odon de Cluny', pp. 252–53.

[57] Odo of Cluny, *Vita sancti Gregorii episcopi Turonensis*, ed. by Migne, cols 117–18.

[58] Gregory of Tours, *De gloria beatorum confessorum*, ed. by Krusch and Levison, 39, p. 772; English translation: Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Confessors*, trans. by Van Dam, pp. 51–52.

[59] Odo of Cluny, *Vita sancti Gregorii episcopi Turonensis*, ed. by Migne, cols 117–18.

[60] Most scholars agree on this. See for instance Rosé, *Construire une société seigneuriale*, p. 49.

[61] John of Salerno, *Vita sancti Odonis*, ed. by Migne, cols 45–46.

definitive, even if time elapsed before Odo's obedience was transferred from his earthly father to the Heavenly one. Odo had little agency in this. The fact that he was sent to a priest to be educated immediately after he was weaned seems to substantiate the hypothesis of an early dedication to the Church. However, when Odo came back home after some years, he was such a strong and beautiful boy that his father decided instead to make him a warrior and sent him to lay courts to be educated. One can find an echo of such an evolution from literary and religious studies to secular studies in Odo's *Vita Geraldi*: as a *puer*, Gerald was first applied (*applicatus est*) to learn the Psalter, but then his parents directed him towards secular activities, as was usual for noble children.[62] In both cases the future saints had no power to decide their future. Both saints also fell ill, which affected their training. Gerald was still a *puer* when, by parental decision, he further pursued his ecclesiastical studies, lest he be too feeble to develop into a warrior due to his sickness. Having recovered on entering adolescence, however, he returned to the traditional education of a young noble with his own desires not taken into account.[63] Odo likewise fell ill with terrible headaches when he was fifteen and had to move back home.[64] After his illness lasted three years, his father finally recalled the oblation he had arranged of his son to Martin and let the saint have him: 'So, the gift which I offered freely, O blessed Martin, you require exactly.'[65] Odo then was able 'to decide' to become a canon of St Martin.

Except for this ultimate gesture, Odo is mostly passive, albeit somewhat reluctant. In a tale transcribed by his hagiographer, in the first person singular he depicts himself as hating the aristocratic pursuit of hunting. At this same time, he prays to the Virgin Mary afraid that he is on the wrong path of life but is unable to change. During the same vigils of Christmas, he later joins his voice abruptly to the canons of St Martin's, and this was when his headache started.

[62] Odo of Cluny, *De vita sancti Geraldi Auriliacensis*, ed. by Migne, col. 645; Odo of Cluny, *The Life of St. Gerald of Aurillac*, trans. by Sitwell, p. 97. However, this translation says that Gerald 'applied himself to the study of letters', giving him more agency than the Latin original did.

[63] Odo of Cluny, *De vita sancti Geraldi Auriliacensis*, ed. by Migne, col. 645; Odo of Cluny, *The Life of St. Gerald of Aurillac*, trans. by Sitwell, pp. 97–98.

[64] One cannot but be struck by the similarities between the three *vitae*: John's *Vita Odonis*, Odo's *Vita Gregorii*, and Odo's *Vita Geraldi*. In the three texts, a sickness in his teens made the saint's entrance into the Church a serious possibility. Whatever the truth behind these stories, they give some insight on what criteria parents considered to decide whether or not to give their sons to the Church in Odo's days.

[65] John of Salerno, *Vita sancti Odonis*, ed. by Migne, col. 47; John of Salerno, *The Life of Saint Odo*, trans. by Sitwell, p. 11.

Whether these three events (prayer, singing, and headache) were truly contemporaneous, or whether they were an a posteriori invention by Odo and John, the issue remains that despite his discomfort in his current situation, he had little agency. Odo is never presented as frankly opposing his father or demanding to enter the Church.[66] He does so only once his father has agreed that his son is really Martin's. In fact, Odo is not radical about his future before the age of thirty, when he chose to cast off the habit of secular canon and become a monk.[67]

The three writers who rewrote the *Life* of Odo did not change this tale of youthful obedience. However, the latest of these, Nalgod, who wrote in the 1120s, is extremely scornful regarding the father, insisting on his carnality ('carnalis pater [...] nature ductus impetu') and stupidity ('paterna stultitia').[68] This discourse is new in a Cluniac context, as it criticizes bluntly the voices of authority and indicates that adolescent revolt had then become permissible (if leading to the cloister).

In the early twelfth century, at the same time as Nalgod was rewriting Odo's story, other Cluniac authors were also producing new tales of conversion. In the *lives* of Hugh of Semur (who died in 1109) and in some key anecdotes told by Peter the Venerable, in his *De miraculis*, the change of tone is striking: there are

[66] Michael E. Goodich read these sections of the *Vita Odonis* and the *Vita Geraldi* differently and speaks about adolescence crises: Goodich, *From Birth to Old Age*, p. 126. See also the refined analysis of this anecdote by Rosenwein, 'Y avait-il un "moi" au haut Moyen Âge', pp. 48–49.

[67] One chapter in Odo's *Life* by John of Salerno shows him helping a young woman to run away from her parents who had decided to marry her, in order that she might live instead a religious life (John of Salerno, *Vita sancti Odonis*, ed. by Migne, cols 59–60; John of Salerno, *The Life of Saint Odo*, trans. by Sitwell, pp. 36–39). However the revolt itself is minimized as the parents are never depicted as present. Moreover, while in the English translation of the *Vita*, she is always described as a 'girl', John specified from the start that she was a *virgo iam adulta* and only used the term *uirgo* throughout, never *puella*. Interestingly this anecdote is placed right after Odo convinced his parents to enter the monastic life, and immediately before he was consecrated a priest and became an abbot. In other words, John inserted this episode at the same time as he was presenting Odo as being high enough in the spiritual hierarchy to be able to disregard the usual terrestrial hierarchies. Still, this episode illustrates the fact that there existed some teenagers revolting against their parents even prior to the twelfth century, but the hagiographers were not developing this theme.

[68] 'L'*Editio minor* della "*Vita*" di Oddone di Cluny', ed. by Fini, pp. 134–35, and Nalgod, *Vita Odonis*, ed. by Migne, col. 87. Nalgod's discourse is especially striking when compared to the quite positive description of Odo's father offered by Odo himself to his future hagiographer (John of Salerno, *Vita sancti Odonis*, ed. by Migne, cols 45–46; John of Salerno, *The Life of Saint Odo*, trans. by Sitwell, pp. 7–8).

no more passive conversions.[69] Whatever the age considered, even in the case of an oblate, the new convert is almost always depicted as a wilful convert.[70] It is in this context that one finds for the first time in the Cluniac hagiography the image of the rebellious adolescent. The five authors of the *lives* of Hugh of Semur all underlined his refusal to follow the path drawn for him by his parents, most especially his father. Some, like Hugh of Gournay, present a short version and say that he ran away to become a monk against his parents' wishes ('unde factum est ut inuitis parentibus ad monasterium fugeret').[71] Others, like Gilo of Toucy, explain that he first constrained his father to accept his choice of an ecclesiastical career and then entered Cluny, against parental knowledge ('patre nesciente').[72]

[69] Even though Peter evokes oblation to the Church in positive terms (see note 7 above), when discussing the saintly life of the Cluniac Gerald, he makes him a cleric *a pueritia*, but only a monk by the end of adolescence ('toto a pene adolescentie tempore decurso'). Even more interesting, Peter does not say a word about his earthly parents, nor who decided that Gerald should become a cleric and later a monk (Peter the Venerable, *De miraculis libri duo*, ed. by Bouthillier, I. 8, p. 24). The same silence regarding the parents and the decision process leading to oblation can be found in his portrayal of Matthew of Albano's childhood, except that he underlines this time his noble and wealthy origins (ibid., II. 4, p. 103). When describing Matthew's death, Peter underlines once more that his conversion dated from his childhood, but implies that Matthew had chosen this path ('Diuina obsequia quibus ut supradictum est se a puero totum dedicauerat', ibid., II. 17, p. 129). I cannot help but think that it is not a coincidence, but rather an illustration of Peter's sweet irony, that his unique portrayal of an oblation with an active father concerns a Carthusian case, given that oblation was forbidden by this order (ibid., II. 29, pp. 154–55). The detailed story offered in II. 32 (ibid., pp. 161–63) of the resurrection of a child at the tomb of Saint Mayeul followed by his offering to the saint does not refer to an oblation; the child was made a serf. See Jean-Pierre Torrell and Denise Bouthillier's footnote in Peter the Venerable, *Livre des merveilles de Dieu*, ed. and trans. by Torrell and Bouthillier, p. 281n.

[70] See also for instance one *vita* somewhat linked with Cluny: Gauthier d'Oydes, *Vita S. Anastasii*, ed. by Migne, col. 427. Ironically, the *vita* of Peter the Venerable, written by Raoul of Sully under the abbacy of Stephen of Boulogne (1161–73), presents his oblation in very traditional terms, with no reference to the child's will: Raoul of Sully, *Vita Petri Venerabilis*, ed. by Migne, col. 17 (*BHL* 6787). This is one more (arguably secondary) argument to question the traditional reading of statute 36. If Peter the Venerable had forbidden oblation in no uncertain terms, one could have expected his hagiographer to present his entrance into the monastery of Sauxillanges in a different light.

[71] Hugh of Gournay, *Vita S. Hugonis Cluniacensis abbatis*, ed. by Cowdrey, p. 121; Renald of Vézelay, 'Vies de saint Hugues de Cluny par l'abbé Renaud de Vézelay', ed. by Huygens, pp. 40, 61.

[72] Gilo of Toucy, *Vita Hugonis abbatis*, ed. by Cowdrey, pp. 49–50; Hildebert of Lavardin, *Vita sancti Hugonis abbatis*, ed. by Migne, col. 861.

The hagiographers alter the story but never the existence of his revolt, and always assess it positively.[73]

In these monastic stories the saint is never depicted as passing through an adolescent crisis when he refuses the secular path chosen by his parents; rather he is presented as acknowledging his true path. Indeed, these tales were not intended for the parents; they were read and heard first and foremost by adolescent monks and older ones. They reinforced a sense of boundary between the cloister and the outer world, and convinced the youthful ones inside the monastery that they were where they should be.[74] The Cluniacs had become open to a certain *prise de parole* by adolescents, as long as it consolidated their own control over them and limited the power of their potentially dissenting voices. However, what is most intriguing here is not this issue of control, but that, whether invented or real, the voices of the adolescents were now occasionally heard.

The Golden Age of Cluny ends with Peter the Venerable and with him slows drastically the great hagiographical production of the previous decades. It is therefore impossible to find out whether or not the ideal of the rebellious adolescent became a new topos of the Burgundian abbey, or if the shift was temporary.[75] We know, however, from studies made on other hagiographical sources,

[73] Barbero, *Un santo in famiglia*, pp. 125–44, reads this negative depiction of Hugh's family as resulting from a very different process: according to this scholar, the reformed monasticism of the tenth to the twelfth centuries had been rejecting increasingly more violently the values of the warrior nobility. His interpretation should not be disregarded, but one must wonder why this discourse became especially virulent by the late eleventh and early twelfth century, exactly when young men were entering the cloisters in greater numbers. Moreover, the overall behaviour of the Cluniacs, so dependent on the generosity of and so hospitable towards the warrior class belies the real depth of this rift.

[74] Such a literature would also help adolescents to mature, whether they were inside or outside the Church; see Frijhoff, 'Enfants saints, enfants prodiges', pp. 56–58. Of course, one should not read literally all these hagiographical sources and believe that, from the early twelfth century onwards, almost all adolescents had the choice to decide on their future. A good example of the falseness of some of these tales is to be found in L'Hermite-Leclercq, 'Roseline, Jeanne et Jeanne-Diane'.

[75] The latter might be the case, but the corpus of sources is too limited to draw real conclusions. As already implied previously, Raoul of Sully did not present Peter the Venerable as a revolted adolescent in his *vita*: Raoul of Sully, *Vita Petri Venerabilis*, ed. by Migne, col. 17. Moreover, in the two *vitae* of Morandus (d. 1115), written in a context somewhat linked with Cluny in the second half of the twelfth century, the hagiographers did not speak of the child's will: *Vita S. Morandi monachis*, ed. by Henschen and others (*BHL* 6019, *c.* 1165–75), 1. 4, p. 341, and *Vita beati Morandi confessoris*, ed. by Marrier and Duchesne (*BHL* 6020, after 1165–75), col. 501.

especially by Barbero, Goodich, or Weinstein and Bell, that the rebellious adolescent is definitively a topos of the twelfth- and especially thirteenth-century hagiography.[76] The evolving definition of *adolescentia* in contemporary writings might point indeed to an evolving conceptualization of teenagers from the early twelfth century onwards.

* * *

The last part of my research is based on all the definitions of the life cycle I was able to collect from the literature on this topic, which amounted to almost eighty definitions written between the third century and 1200.[77] Scholars studying the medieval life cycle have often complained about the too numerous and divergent definitions which render the process of arriving at any useful conclusions difficult.[78] For the most part, the definitions used to date have been collected from the high or later Middle Ages when many points of view coexisted: the end of childhood varied depending whether or not *adolescentia* was included in it, the upper limit of *adolescentia* was quite unstable, and the end of *iuuentus* and the beginning of *senectus* fluctuated even more wildly depending on whether or not there was a middle age inserted between the two. This variety can likely be explained by the juxtaposition of traditional and ecclesiastical definitions of the life cycle, with new (and antique) secular definitions, some borrowed from Latin translations of Arabic medical treatises, based on a non-Christian conception of the life cycle. However, for the early and central Middle Ages, a far clearer image

[76] The topos of the adolescent saints rejecting the future designed for them by their parents predates the twelfth century and was even quite popular in late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. However it declined in importance during the Merovingian period and remained the exception rather than the norm up to the eleventh century (Barbero, *Un santo in famiglia*, chap. 5). See also Sherwood's article in this volume. In the *vitae* written between 1215 to 1334 studied by Goodich, 'Childhood and Adolescence', this scholar remarks that 'it would appear that those saints attached to the less rigorous, more established orders like the Cistercians, Benedictines, or canons, led less turbulent childhoods, and merely fulfilled familial desires in their religious vocations' (pp. 196–97). According to Donald Weinstein and Rudolph M. Bell too, the shift happened in the thirteenth century when 'the story of the saint who had been a dutiful adolescent gave way to the drama of conversion crisis, family conflict, and sexual temptation': Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society*, p. 49.

[77] This list accompanied by a short analysis can be found in the introduction to this volume.

[78] Such is for instance the position of Didier Lett when presenting a large array of thirteenth-century definitions of the life cycle, even though he does not bluntly reject their validity (Lett, *L'Enfant des miracles*, pp. 26–27); same with Schultz, 'Medieval Adolescence', pp. 530–31, or James, 'Childhood and Youth in the Early Middle Ages', p. 15, all studies which are otherwise original and rich.

emerges, mostly because there is more uniformity among the authors' point of view and way of life.[79] As can be seen from the introduction to this volume, almost all the definitions between the sixth and the very early twelfth century fitted into a simple overall structure.[80] There were three main ages — or because they are so broad, one might prefer the term phases — almost always present in the definitions of the life cycle: *pueritia*, *iuuentus*, and *senectus*. The only passage in the Cluniac hagiographical sources where I found a possible comprehensive list of the ages of life referred exactly to these three: Jotsald points to the fact that Odilo was receiving different monks inside the cloister, 'some *in pueritia*, some *in juventute*, some *in senectute*', but he was able to raise them all into one body (*in unum corpus*).[81] *Pueritia*, best translated by childhood, would always end at fourteen or fifteen. Very rarely is this first phase called by other names, such as *infantia*, *primaeva aetas*, or *prima aetas*. *Iuuentus*, which is better translated as 'young adulthood', would follow and end at forty-nine or fifty. *Senectus*, which is better translated as 'old adulthood', would be the next and last phase, ending with death.

Pueritia, *iuuentus*, and *senectus* are the three main phases, but each was normally divided into two ages: *pueritia* was most often divided between *infantia* (until seven) and *pueritia*. *Iuuentus* was almost always divided into *adolescentia*

[79] However James, 'Childhood and Youth in the Early Middle Ages' (pp. 15–16), has studied the early Middle Ages, around the time of Gregory of Tours, and found and listed few striking cases of uses of the vocabulary of the ages that do not fit the model I explain below. The question is whether these cases are simple exceptions or whether they are representative of a general looseness of vocabulary regarding the ages. I cannot answer for the whole of the early and central medieval period, though in the finite but relatively extensive corpus of tenth- to mid-twelfth-century Cluniac hagiographical sources, so-called normative sources (the customaries and statutes), and charters, the usages of the age vocabulary generally fit with the definitions of the ages presented in the introduction to this volume. The only noticeable and fundamental exception is found in the charters, and maybe also in the customaries, where the term *infantes* is occasionally used to designate not only very young children, but first and foremost offspring of whatever age. This does not mean that one cannot find some counter-examples here and there. In 'De l'enfance à la maturité', Claude Carozzi attempted to compare the vocabulary of the ages of life used by two Cluniac authors with one of the definitions of the ages given by Isidore of Seville. Carozzi did not find an exact correlation ('Le vocabulaire employé dans l'une et l'autre Vie ne s'en écarte pas mais jamais aucun des deux ne s'enferme dans les limites d'une évaluation numérique', p. 104), but the opposite would have been astonishing given his small sample size.

[80] If one takes into consideration that the boxes in pale grey in Table 1 in the introduction to this volume point to small differences that can be ironed out, then all definitions between the fifth and the very early twelfth century fit with this model.

[81] Jotsald of Saint-Claude, *Vita Odilonis*, ed. by Staub, p. 166. However see also note 37 in the introduction to this volume.

(from fifteen to twenty-eight) and *iuuentus*. *Senectus* was very often divided into two ages: the first one, from forty-nine or fifty was *grauitas*, *aetas senioris*, *maturitas*, or *senectus*; the second one, from seventy or seventy-seven, or eighty, was named *senectus*, *senium*, or *decrepita aetas*. The number of definitions from the sixth to the early twelfth century might therefore count three, four, five, six, or even seven ages, but they would almost systematically fit the above schema based upon the two main divisions; on the one hand between childhood and adulthood, and, on the other, between young adulthood and old adulthood. What to make of *adolescentia* in such definitions?

Most importantly, *adolescentia* was always to be found in adulthood, and clearly distinguished from childhood. Its lower age limit, corresponding to profession, puberty, and the entrance into adulthood, is perfectly understandable. It is harder to come up with completely convincing explanations for its upper limit: twenty-eight.[82] According to Honorius Augustodunensis, *adolescentia* represented the age when men started to be ordained, while *iuuentus* was the time to become a deacon and a priest; however this explanation fits only with his so far untraditional upper limit to *adolescentia*, twenty-one years old, given that the minimum age to become deacon or priest according to canon law was twenty-five.[83] Maybe one can imagine instead *adolescentia* from fifteen to twenty-eight as the stage preceding monks' average attainment to priesthood (supposing that they entered as oblates in the monastery, as the majority did).[84] This explanation is very attractive, but I have so far found no explicit proof for such an association. A twelfth-century manuscript linked with the school of Laon explained *adolescentia* from a completely different perspective: it starts with the beginning of lower puberty (*inferior pubes*) and ends up with the end of higher puberty (*superius pubescit*), a phenomenon probably encompassing the growth of a beard and the development of the upper torso.[85] It is also quite credible that the years between

[82] The late twenties (and sometime as late as the early thirties) seem to have been considered the age of full maturity for Venetian male patricians in the late Middle Ages; see Chojnacki, 'Measuring Adulthood', p. 383.

[83] Metz, 'L'Enfant dans le droit canonique médiéval', pp. 32 and 49.

[84] Twenty-seven/twenty-eight (the age limit usually given to *adolescentia*) fits nicely between twenty-five and thirty. Regarding twenty-five as the minimum age to become a deacon, see note 18 above. Regarding thirty, the age when Christ would have started preaching, as the minimum age for becoming a priest, see Isidore of Seville, *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, ed. by Lawson, lb. II, c. V, p. 59; Hrabanus Maurus, *De institutione clericorum libri tres*, ed. by Zimpel, lb. I, c. XIII, pp. 308–09; and van Rhijn, *Shepherds of the Lord*, p. 182.

[85] Lottin, 'Nouveaux fragments théologiques', p. 20, no. 452. On a similar note, see the

fifteen and twenty-eight mark a first phase of young adulthood, that which we might term youth, when the individual faces the greatest difficulties in mastering his body and his mind and is habitually still under the influence of his parents or elders.[86] As we have seen, Odo waited until he was thirty to take his life in a new direction. I believe that this first phase of young adulthood was conceived as the more negative, or at least the most unstable one, the equivalent to the negative second phase of old adulthood, *senium*. It was perceived as an age more prone to passion. What is certain, however, was that this definition of *adolescentia* found in the early and central Middle Ages, lasting fourteen years and counting both teenagers and (physically and work-wise) fully fledged adults, has little to do with our own twenty-first-century adolescence. In other words, adolescence (as we might conceive it) does not appear in the medieval definitions of the life cycle before at least the twelfth century.

However, by the early twelfth century, some changes began to emerge in the definitions of the life cycle. Two of these changes have nothing to do with our topic: the occasional lowering of the entrance age into *senectus* (forty-five, forty, or even thirty-five), and the intermittent re-emergence or apparition of a *uirilis aetas*, age of virility, as a distinct age between *iuuentus* and *senectus*. This 'middle age' — which I have nicknamed in my mind the 'perfect adulthood', neither too young nor too old — had disappeared since late Antiquity. Observing the evolution of *ado-*

definition of majority as found in the *sachsenspiegel*, discussed in Deborah Youngs's article in this volume, note 29.

[86] Marc Kleijwegt studying classical times has chosen to call this life phase 'Youth' to distinguish it from modern adolescence: Kleijwegt, *Ancient Youth*, p. xii and p. 41. However one should note that the young in the Graeco-Roman world were not perceived as full adults, neither socially nor legally. His work is greatly influenced by Gillis, *Youth and History*. For Gillis, young people of the premodern world were in a state of semi-dependence until their late twenties (ibid., pp. 1–9). In the anonymous *Tractatus de philosophia* of the second half of the twelfth century, *adolescentia* ends at twenty-one years old and represents the period of life when the body grows in height and width, while *iuuentus* ends at thirty-two or thirty-three years old and is the time when one must help one's father in his work. See Dahan, 'Une Introduction à la philosophie au XII^{e} s.', p. 184. This explanation of *iuuentus* is based on its similarities with the verb *iuuare* ('to help'), but it testifies also to the medieval perception that young people could remain in a state of relative dependency quite late in their life, if their father had survived so far. A good example is Herman-Judah discussed by Jessie Sherwood in her article in this volume. However not all *adolescentes* were kept in such a semi-dependant position, especially if their parents had died: a Cluniac charter dated 1065, probably redacted in Cluny by a monk, is centred on the gifts of a certain Jozerannus, described as an *adolescens* (*adolescens quidam*) and a *iuuenis* (*idem juvenis*), while being wealthy enough to become a substantial donor and having a wife and three sons (*Recueil des chartes de l'abbaye de Cluny*, ed. by Bruel and Bernard, no. 3406).

lescentia proper, at least two definitions of the early twelfth century, by Honorius Augustodunensis (in his *De imagine mundi*) and an anonymous *Tractatus quidam de Philosophia et partibus eius* (from Chartres), present a much shorter *adolescentia*, ending at twenty-one.[87] Regarding its chronological limits, this *adolescentia* looks much more like our own adolescence today. Two cases might seem an insignificant number; however, one must take into account that most definitions do not mention chronological limits; other authors might therefore have agreed with an upper limit set at twenty-one for *adolescentia*. Another early twelfth-century change regarding *adolescentia* is that this age is now occasionally linked with *pueritia*, rather than *iuuentus*.[88] For instance, William of Saint-Thierry has only one first age extending to twenty-five or thirty which he calls *adolescentia*. In other words, exactly at the same time when Peter the Venerable refused to admit teenagers among the adults, some definitions of the life cycle appear which associated teenagers with childhood, rather than adulthood.

It is not too difficult to attempt an explanation of this evolution for the world outside of the Church. At least from the twelfth century onwards, a shorter adolescence might have well fit with the timeframe of a regulated apprenticeship experienced by an increasing number of young ones and representing a 'long-delayed adulthood': in towns, it can be linked with apprenticeship proper, and in the castles, with the preparation towards the knighting ceremony.[89] Indeed most scholars working on the later Middle Ages and discussing the first stages of young men's lives have usually linked adolescence with childhood rather than adulthood, except the ones who did not distinguish adolescence from youth at large.[90]

[87] On Honorius, see Hofmeister, '*Puer*, *Iuuenis*, *Senex*', pp. 293–94.

[88] Hofmeister, '*Puer*, *Iuuenis*, *Senex*', pp. 295–96, evokes this long *pueritia*, which includes *adolescentia*, to be found in the twelfth century.

[89] See for example Hanawalt, '*The Childe of Bristowe*', p. 168. Nineteen or twenty was also the age when the members of the confraternity of the Arcangelo Raffaello, in Florence, would leave the group of the *pueri* to join the ranks of the *iuuenes* (Taddei, '*Puerizia*, *adolescenza* and *giovinezza*', p. 18). For the knighting ceremony around twenty, see for instance Evergates, *The Aristocracy in the County of Champagne*, pp. 141 and 154–56. More generally, see Youngs, *The Life Cycle*, pp. 107–16. However, it is important to underline that these adolescents were not complete dependants, as they had been during childhood, but rather semi-dependant; see for instance Lett, *L'Enfant des miracles*, pp. 116–19.

[90] On *adolescentia* starting at fourteen and often ending at twenty-one, and being associated with childhood and distinguished from youth and adulthood, see for instance Wasyliw, *Martyrdom, Murder, and Magic*, pp. 4–5 (who, interestingly enough, did not include adolescent girls in her 'child' category, taking into account medieval society's perception); Crouzet-Pavan, 'Une Fleur du mal?', p. 200; and Kline, 'Female Childhoods', p. 13. Stanley Chojnacki, 'Measuring

But why could this evolution also be observed within the Church, at least within the Cluniac microcosm that I have studied?

Until the early twelfth century, Cluniac boys and young men were expected to be dutiful sons and juniors even after they were included in the adult world by the age of fifteen; possibly, then, this inclusion at the moment of puberty served primarily to deal with the cases of orphans of (spiritual) parents, so that, if need be, they could take their future into their own hands (as Mayeul had been depicted doing). By the early twelfth century, two novel attitudes with respect to Cluniac teenagers have been observed: the teenagers were both encouraged to revolt against the secular authorities to affirm their own choices, and, simultaneously, within the cloister, pushed off the echelons of adulthood into childhood and criticized for their reluctance to obey. Both behaviours are intricately linked: revolt and constraint go hand in hand. I would like to outline three possible main causes for this emergence of a different discourse on adolescence in early twelfth-century Cluny.

Firstly, the population of Cluny had significantly increased in the preceding decades, especially given the entrance of many adult converts.[91] These late converts brought up in the world, whether within the secular Church or the laity, might well have taken in with them a secular world view of the life cycle, with an adolescence linked to childhood instead of adulthood. Indeed, one should not ignore the fundamental impact that this change in recruitment must have had on monasticism: its ranks were now filled up less and less with children easy to mould, and more and more with adult converts raised and educated far away from the sheltering walls of the cloister.[92]

Adulthood', pp. 371–72, 378–79, and 382–83, notices also a late entrance into adulthood, around the age of twenty, for the young male Venetians, members of the elite; however, he calls adolescence the years past the late teens, so that his adolescence is actually incorporated into adulthood, and not childhood. A similar approach is adopted by Ruth Mazo Karras who does not distinguish between adolescence and youth and therefore also associates adolescence with adulthood (Karras, *From Boys to Men*, pp. 12–14). A third approach, one found for instance in Eisenbichler's 'Introduction' (Eisenbichler, *The Premodern Teenager*, p. 14) and Taddei, '*Puerizia*, *adolescenza* and *giovinezza*' (p. 19), is to separate adolescence from childhood and adulthood and consider it an in-between stage. However, from all these examples, it is clear that the teenage years are normally separated from adulthood by scholars working on the high and late Middle Ages. Regarding the early Middle Ages and the fact that adolescence and youth were not really separated from adulthood, see James, 'Childhood and Youth in the Early Middle Ages', p. 23.

[91] See for instance Udalrich of Zell, *Antiquiores consuetudines Cluniacensis Monasterii*, ed. by Migne, col. 668. More generally, on entrance into Cluny around that period, see Cochelin, 'Peut-on parler de noviciat à Cluny'.

[92] The *vita* of Etienne d'Obazine offers a clear illustration of the significant difference

Secondly, it is entirely plausible that this growth in the ranks of adults made it less urgent to admit the young, as enough individuals were now present to take on the many duties of the abbey.[93] On the contrary, a world with limited manpower cannot have the luxury to postpone the entrance of its adolescent members into adulthood. However this increase in numbers at Cluny had already started more than half a century earlier, by the 1060s. In order to understand why adolescence was not 'infantilized' sooner, one should also take into account the context and especially Peter's will to remodel the Cluniac society.

Indeed, my third point is that Peter's *Statuta* was a text aiming to reform the *ecclesia cluniacensis*; so the context for this shift in the conceptualization of *adolescentia* was one in which changes were desired, envisaged, and sometime realized.[94] More tentatively and generally, the early twelfth century was a period of contestation, restructuring, and openness towards divergent voices (formalized in the scholastic disputation). In the canonical writings of the Church, growing importance was given to personal free will, inside the Church for the oblates (now allowed to decide whether or not to remain monks)[95] or outside it for newlyweds.[96] In other words, adolescents were suddenly given a theoretical right to reject the decision of their (spiritual) parents and affirm their own will, a situation that clashed with traditional monasticism. Probably, the main reason for the flourishing of the hagiographical topos of the revolted adolescent who wants to enter religion against his or her parents' wishes was didactic: it was fundamental to reinforce the vacillating will of the young monks and nuns to remain under the cowl and veil, now that it was possible for them to refuse their parents' decision to be where they were.

However, these characters had to be believable, and the picture of the revolted adolescent might have had some basis in reality. By and large, in the first half of the twelfth century, authorities of the past and the present were more easily chal-

between oblates and non-oblates: *Vie de St. Étienne d'Obazine*, ed. and trans. by Aubrun, pp. 170–73. See also Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century*, pp. 100–01.

[93] Even though it is a somewhat different context, Cistercians refused converts younger than eighteen in their ranks, unless the monasteries were built in faraway regions. In such contexts, teenagers were accepted (Lynch, 'The Cistercians and Underage Novices', p. 290).

[94] On Peter's project, see Saurette, 'Rhetorics of Reform'.

[95] Metz, 'L'Enfant dans le droit canonique médiéval', pp. 54–58, and especially Berend, 'La Subversion invisible'. More generally, on the changes within monasticism in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, see the fundamental study by Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century*, especially pp. 101–07.

[96] There exists an enormous literature on this topic; see for instance Reid, *Power over the Body*.

lenged. In the monastic world per se, new forms of monastic life were coming to the fore, and Cluny had to face the violent criticisms of Bernard of Clairvaux and others. Given such circumstances, why not ascribe some agency to the Cluniac adolescents and imagine that, influenced by *l'air du temps*, some were indeed challenging the *auctoritas* of their elders and occasionally going through some form of 'crisis'?

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Rebellious Youth and Pliant Children: Jewish Converts in *Adolescentia*

Jessie Sherwood*

One might easily assume that most Jews who elected to convert to Christianity during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were minors. Certainly, the centuries' most dramatic conversion narratives feature boys and girls — most notably Jacob of Regensburg, Catherine of Louvain, Elizabeth of Linz, and Herman-Judah of Cologne — renouncing their parents, their communities, and their ancestral religion in order to embrace Christianity. Not surprisingly perhaps, several modern scholars have concluded that the majority of Jews who chose to convert did so while they were adolescents, and because they were adolescents.[1] Despite its obvious attractions, their thesis is not without flaws. It tends to ignore the very real differences between medieval *adolescentia* and modern adolescence, the inherent unreliability of most of these conversion narratives, and the more reliable albeit duller references to adult converts. Medieval authors generally defined *adolescentia* in ways that are often similar to modern adolescence, but not identical to it. They saw young men and women as malleable, but *adolescentia* both began and ended later than adolescence ordinarily does. Moreover, with the partial exception of Herman-Judah's

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[1] Cohen, 'The Mentality of the Medieval Jewish Apostate', pp. 34–35; Jordan, 'Adolescence and Conversion in the Middle Ages'.

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autobiography, the accounts of children and adolescents' radical apostasies are of dubious historicity. Within their staid counterparts, like contemporary letters written about such converts or texts written by them, the Jews who chose to convert were generally adults. Where children are mentioned in these sources, they are usually appendages to their parents' conversions, not willful apostates.

Jacob, Catherine, and Elizabeth were not, I shall argue, representatives of the complicated realities of Jewish conversion but rather the products of their authors' assumptions about children and Jewish converts. They were ideal converts, who conformed to the contemporary archetypes for children, youths, and conversion: they converted in youthful rebellion against their parents and natal religion. They behaved as Christian saints did in contemporary hagiographies. Moreover, because children were seen as more malleable, more pliant, Christian authors often assumed that they would more easily and completely absorb Christian mores than their adult counterparts. Indeed, Christian writers shared this assumption with their Jewish counterparts. Jewish authorities feared that youths and children could be more irrevocably lost to the Church than adults, because they too saw children as more pliant, and not without cause. Herman-Judah, a willing convert in his youth, and the lesser-known Guillaume de Flaix, an unwilling convert in his childhood, suggest that young converts might, indeed, be more readily absorbed into the Christian community than older ones and that youthful qualities facilitated conversion. In their extant texts, both men imply that youth could and did play a crucial role in the process of conversion. A comparison between the two men also indicates that Guillaume, although not initially a willing convert, became far more Christianized than Herman-Judah, who was willing but older at the time of his baptism. Yet both converts, particularly when read in conjunction, suggest that the realities of youthful conversions were more complex than the simplistic tropes of teenage rebellion.

Scholarly suppositions about adolescent Jewish apostates often rest on the conflation of modern adolescence and medieval *adolescentia*. Although they overlap, medieval and modern definitions of childhood and adolescence do not exactly align. According to the medieval definitions, one was a *puer*, or a child, from seven until fourteen. *Adolescentia* began at fifteen and lasted until age twenty-one or twenty-eight, after which one became a *iuvenis*. An *adolescens* could marry, swear oaths, and take monastic vows.[2] Herman-Judah, the exemplar of adolescent converts, was twenty-one years old, married, and already launched into a

[2] See Isabelle Cochelin's introduction in this volume; also Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, pp. 110–11; Orme, *Medieval Children*, pp. 216, 322; Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, pp. 27–29.

career lending money when he converted. He was an *adolescens* and referred to himself as such,[3] but it is doubtful if a married banker in his early twenties would be called an adolescent today. Further complicating matters for modern readers, these neat categories were at times blurred in actual use. Authors sometimes used the terms *puer* and *adolescens*, or *adolescens* and *iuvenis* interchangeably.[4]

Moreover, the above categories were Latinate and Christian. Other languages and other communities had their own definitions of childhood, youth, and adulthood. According to James Schultz, Middle High German had no word corresponding to adolescence. One was a child until one became an adult, a passage marked by one's physical maturity and social majority.[5] Jewish communities, to which converts like Herman-Judah originally belonged, had their own definitions. According to the *Pirque Avot* (*Ethics of the Fathers*), a child was ready for scripture at five, for the *Mishnah* (the first part of the Talmud) at ten, for the commandments at thirteen, for the Talmud at fifteen, for marriage at eighteen, for the pursuit of righteousness at twenty, and reached full strength at age thirty.[6] One thus ceased to be a child at ten but did not become fully adult until thirty, and the ages of majority could vary widely.[7] Marriage, for example, was often a crucial benchmark, but the age at which one could, or did, marry ranged from eighteen to thirty for young men, and often earlier for young women.[8] It can be, therefore, quite misleading to assume that someone was a child or an adolescent in any modern sense because he is an *adolescens* or she is a *puella* in a medieval text.

More often than not, it is simply impossible to determine into which, if any, of the above categories a Jewish convert fell. Most of the extant references to Jewish converts are brief and completely silent about the convert's age at baptism.[9] However, where a convert's age was given, or can be inferred, that convert

[3] Herman-Judah, *Opusculum*, ed. by Niemeyer, c. 2 and c. 10, pp. 72–76 and 78–81.

[4] See Pastoureau, 'Emblems of Youth', pp. 224–29. His primary sources are mostly from the twelfth century onwards. See also Cochelin's introduction in this volume.

[5] Schultz, *The Knowledge of Childhood*, pp. 21–38, 131; Schultz, 'Medieval Adolescence'.

[6] *Pirque Avot* 5.25, quoted in Roth, '"The Ages of Man" in Two Medieval Hebrew Poems', p. 41.

[7] Goldin, 'Jewish Society under Pressure', pp. 35–39; Horrowitz, 'The Worlds of Jewish Youth', pp. 87–90; Roth, '"The Ages of Man" in Two Medieval Hebrew Poems'. Simha Goldin points to thirteen as the primary age of majority, whereas Horrowitz and Roth emphasize the rolling ages of majority set by the Bible and the Talmud.

[8] Horrowitz, 'The Worlds of Jewish Youth', pp. 87, 93–96; Roth, '"The Ages of Man" in Two Medieval Hebrew Poems'.

[9] Most are terse allusions to the convert's poverty, wealth, property, position, or presence as a witness. For an overview of known twelfth-century Jewish converts, see Sherwood, 'Jewish

was almost always an adult. Petrus Alfonsi, a philosopher and a physician, was forty-four when he converted in 1106.[10] Others by virtue of careers, marriages, and children can also be identified as adults, and certainly not minors. Joshua of Trier, for example, was a respected physician who counted his city's bishop among his patients before his conversion sometime between 1100 and 1125.[11] Apostates' divorces, spouses, and dowries were the subject of several rabbinic *responsa*.[12] Christian authorities, likewise, fielded questions about the legitimacy of converts' marriages and the fate of their dowries.[13] Thus we can safely infer that many, like Herman-Judah, were already married at the time of their conversions. Indeed, conversion was often a family affair. Many converts, like Robert, a protégé of Anselm of Canterbury who was baptized 'with his small family', brought their children with them into the Church.[14]

Outside of the sermon stories I have found only one clear reference to a Jewish child or youth converting independently: a boy (*puer*) who was kidnapped by several Oxford Jews, 'on the occasion of his conversion' in 1236.[15] Robert Bacon, who seems to have made rather a habit of training Jewish converts, took custody

Conversion', pp. 151–59; and Haverkamp, 'Baptised Jews in German Lands'.

[10] Petrus Alfonsi, *Dialogi contra Judaeos*, ed. by Mieth, pp. 6–8; Tolan, *Petrus Alfonsi and his Medieval Readers*, pp. 9–11.

[11] *Gesta Treverorum*, ed. by Waitz and Kiloniensi, I. 21, pp. 194–95.

[12] Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance*, pp. 67–68; Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg, *Responsa*, ed. by Agus, 171, 363, 388, pp. 241–42, 378, 392; Agus, *Urban Civilization in Pre-Crusade Europe*, II, 690–93, 706, 800–03, 806–07; Wacholder, 'Cases of Proselytizing', pp. 291–95. These *responsa* collections do not contain questions about underage apostates.

[13] Clement III to Gonzales, bishop of Segovia (1187–91), doc. 62, in *The Apostolic See and the Jews*, ed. by Simonsohn, I, 65; Innocent III to Ugo, bishop of Ferrara (1 May 1199), doc. 68, in ibid., I, 72; Innocent III to Albert de Buxhoevden, bishop of Livonia (19 April 1201), doc. 76, in ibid., I, 79. See also Pakter, *Medieval Canon Law and the Jews*, pp. 263–87; and *The Apostolic See and the Jews*, ed. by Simonsohn, VII, 245–46; Stacey, 'The Conversion of Jews', p. 271.

[14] Anselm of Canterbury, 'Epistle 380', ed. by Schmitt: 'Ordinate itaque illi vos, domne prior, de eleemosina, non per servientes qui plus quaerunt quae sua sunt quam quae dei sunt, sed per monachum eleemosinarium debetis, et vos domne WILLELME, ex iis quae mihi ex archdiaconatu servare debetis, quatenus ille cum familiola sua nullam duram patiatur indigentiam, sed gaudeat se de perfidia transisse ad veram fidem, et probet ex ipsa nostra pietate quia fides nostra propinquior est deo quam Iudaica.'

[15] *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III*, ed. by Martin and others, III, 383: 'Mandatum est constabulario Exonie quod puerum qui dicebatur raptus esse per Judeos Oxonie occasione conversionis sue et inventus est et penes eum moram facit, ut rex audivit, sine dilatione mittat usque Oxoniam liberandum ibidem fratri Roberto Bacun ad custodiendum.'

of the boy.[16] Yet this child was by no means the norm. In the same year another Jewish convert, Firmius, revealed that while he was still a Jew considering conversion, the Jews of Norwich carried away his children. The city's constable detained the Jews involved so that the children might, before their father, decide 'whether they would follow him [...], or remain in their error'.[17]

The children of Jewish converts were rarely offered such a choice. Of the extant papal letters three refer to children baptized with their parents, several refer to the children of converts, and one deals with the conflicting claims of a convert father and a Jewish mother. Not one concerns a child or youth converting independently. For example, M., the daughter of P., was 'reborn in the waters of baptism with him' according to Innocent III in 1199.[18] Similarly, another convert, Isaac of Sens, deposited his wife and children with a royal official, asking that he 'cause them to be baptized', before travelling to Rome to receive baptism himself.[19] The circumstances surrounding the baptism of a third convert, Odeline, and her children were more ambiguous. She, her daughter, and her sons are simply described as converts from Judaism to the Catholic faith in a letter of 1236.[20] Nonetheless, it seems probable that her three children were Christians, because Odeline herself converted. Two other converts, Magister B. and Phillip of Paris, each had sons who were granted privileges and exemptions by a series of three popes.[21] It is not

[16] *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III*, ed. by Martin and others, III, 383. By 1245, Robert Bacon was training two Jewish converts to be clerics, and one of these clerics-in-training reverted. Unfortunately, as is often the case, it is unclear how or when or why these converts were baptized. *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III*, ed. by Martin and others, V, 298. Stacey, 'The Conversion of Jews', pp. 268, 276.

[17] *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III*, ed. by Martin and others, III, 358: 'Et mandatum est constabulario Norht' quod Judeos detentores predictorum puerorum in ballia sua distringat ad representandum ipsos conspectui patris, ut ipsum sequantur si voluerint, vel in errore suo remaneant etc.'

[18] Innocent III to Gautier II, bishop of Autun (5 November 1199), doc. 72, in *The Apostolic See and the Jews*, ed. by Simonsohn, I, 76: 'P. ac M. filia sua, que cum eo unda baptismatis est renata'.

[19] Innocent III to Peter of Corbeil, archbishop of Sens (8 June 1213), doc. 93, in *The Apostolic See and the Jews*, ed. by Simonsohn, I, 98: 'Sed aliis cum Abrahe pueris expectantibus, idem N. nobili viro — regio marescallo uxorem suam filiosque commendans, et rogans eundem ut eos omnes faceret baptizari, ad nostram duxit presentiam accedendum, quem post multas collationes super lege ac prophetis habitas cum eodem, venerabilis frater noster Tusculanus episcopus diligenter instructum in fide Catholica baptizavit.'

[20] Gregory IX to William of Auvergne, bishop of Paris (5 May 1236), doc. 151, in *The Apostolic See and the Jews*, ed. by Simonsohn, I, 160.

[21] Honorius III to the dean Scholasticus and canon Gottshalk of Bonn (15 April 1221), doc. 112, in *The Apostolic See and the Jews*, ed. by Simonsohn, I, 115–16. Gregory IX to the provosts

clear whether these children were born before or after their fathers' baptisms, but their parents' conversions also made them Christians.

The propensity of children to convert with their parents, rather than to spite them, is starkly illustrated by a case of disputed custody that came before Berthold of Teck, bishop of Strasbourg, and then Gregory IX in 1229. A Jewish convert and his former wife came before the Bishop seeking custody of their four-year-old son. The child's father argued that 'because the boy was below the years of discretion, he should follow [his father] and his faith, rather than his mother and her error'.[22] His mother countered that the boy was still an infant (*infans*) and thus ought to remain in his mother's care until he reached the 'legal' age (*ad legitatem etatem*) when he might decide for himself.[23] She was, seemingly, appealing to Jewish law (with a fascinating reference to her pregnancy and her son's birth), wherein the sons of divorced parents were to remain with their mothers until the age of six,[24] and minors who converted were allowed to repudiate Judaism when they came of age.[25] Her former husband, on the other hand, appealed to his own

of the cathedral and of St Mariengreden, and the dean of St Peter in Mainz (July 1234), doc. 140, in ibid., I, 150. Gregory IX to the dean of St Mary in the Fields in Mainz, and to his brother Willelmus, canon of St John in Mainz (20 October 1234), doc. 141, in ibid., I, 150–51. Gregory IX to Willelmus, canon of St John in Mainz (27 July 1235), doc. 146, in ibid., I, 156. Gregory IX to the provosts of St Mariengreden and to the dean of St Peter in Mainz (13 December 1235), doc. 148, in ibid., I, 157. Gregory IX to Willelmus, canon at St John in Mainz (18 May 1239), doc. 151, in ibid., I, 170. Innocent IV to Bernardus, a cleric, Thomas, and Balduinus (21 April 1250) doc. 193, in ibid., I, 201.

[22] Gregory IX to Berthold of Teck, bishop of Strasbourg (16 May 1229), doc. 124, in *The Apostolic See and the Jews*, ed. by Simonsohn, I, 128: 'Ex litteris tuis accepimus, perlatam fuisse ad synodum tuam huiusmodi questionem, quod quidam videlicet de iudaice cecitatis errore ad Christum lumen verum viam veritatis adductus, uxore sua in iudaismo relicta, in iudicio postulavit instanter, ut eorum filius quadriennis assignaretur eidem, ad fidem Catholicam quam ipse susceperat perducendus, asserens, quod favore religionis christiane et quia puer infra discretionis annos erat, potius ipsum et fidem suam quam matrem et eius errorem sequi deberet.' See also Kleinberg, 'Depriving Parents of the Consolation of Children', pp. 133–34.

[23] Gregory IX to Berthold of Teck, doc. 124, in *The Apostolic See and the Jews*, ed. by Simonsohn, I, 128–29: 'Ad quod illa respondit, quod cum puer adhuc infans existat, propter quod magis materno indiget solacio quam paterno, sibique ante partum onerosus, dolorosus in partu ac post partum laboriosus fuisse noscatur, ac ex hoc legitima coniunctio maris et femine magis matrimonium quam patrimonium nuncupetur, dictus puer apud matrem convenientius remanere quam apud patrem, ad fidem Christianam de novo perductus, transire debebat, aut saltim neutrius sequi, priusquam ad legitimam etatem perveniat, voluntatem, hinc inde multis aliis allegatis.'

[24] Baumgarten, *Mothers and Children*, pp. 159, 171.

[25] Wacholder, 'Cases of Proselytizing', p. 306; *Kethub*, 11a.

adherence to Christianity and his desire to use his child's malleability to convert him. Faced with these competing claims, Berthold took the child into his own custody and consulted the papacy. Not surprisingly, Gregory dictated that the boy should follow his father, because 'after the age of three, a child should be reared and stay with his father [...], and the boy's mother, if he should happen to stay with her, could easily lead him to the error of infidelity'.[26] Although all parties were ostensibly quarrelling over the age at which a child moved from maternal care to paternal custody, the boy's religious future was, quite patently, at stake. He would, Gregory and his parents seem to assume, become a Christian if raised by his father and remain a Jew if raised by his mother.

Reconciling the dutiful children of the papal letters with the rebellious Catherine, Jacob, and Elizabeth requires examining their narratives within the wider context of medieval, not modern, notions of childhood, youth, and conversion. Like Gregory IX, most medieval commentators believed that children were fundamentally malleable. Medieval pedagogues defined children as pliant, passive, and impressionable, blank tablets onto which learning could be inscribed. Children and youths were also deemed more fickle, capricious, and carnal than their elders.[27] A few commentators explicitly argued that children and youths were, therefore, less suitable converts. Bruno of Segni and Godfrey of Admont claimed youths were prone to vanity and temptation and had difficulty subduing their bodies.[28] Godfrey added that children entered the monastery at the behest of others and not of their own volition. From the early twelfth century onwards, monastic communities were growing increasingly wary of children and youth within the monastery, and some began to ban their presence outright.[29] Even

[26] Innocent III to Berthold of Teck, doc. 124, in *The Apostolic See and the Jews*, ed. by Simonsohn, I, 129: 'Cum vero filius in patris potestate consistat, cuius sequitur familiam, et non matris, et in tali etate quis non debeat apud illas remanere personas de quibus possit esse suspicio, quod saluti vel vite insidientur illius, et pueri, post triennium apud patrem non suspectum ali debeant et morari, materque pueri, si eum remanere contingeret apud ipsam, facile illum posset adducere ad infidelitatis errorem, fraternitati tue, in favorem maxime Christiane fidei respondemus, patri eundem puerum assignandum.'

[27] See Mary Dzon's article in this volume, and Cochelin, 'Besides the Book', pp. 24–28; Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, pp. 170–72.

[28] Bruno of Segni, *Lectio in S. Evangelii secundum Matthaeum*, ed. by Migne; Bruno of Segni, *Expositio in Apocalypsim*, ed. by Migne, bk VII, col. 722; Godfrey of Admont, 'Homilia XX', ed. by Migne.

[29] For example, the Carthusians would not accept anyone under the age of twenty: Guigo I, *Coutumes de Chartreuse*, ed. and trans. by a Carthusian, c. 27, p. 220. See also Cochelin's article in this volume and Stoertz, 'Adolescence and Authority'.

Guibert de Nogent and Rupert of Deutz, child oblates who converted as youths, were dubious about children and youths in cloister.[30]

This disquiet about youths emerged almost contemporaneously with a new ideal of future saints as rebelling against their families in order to embrace religious life as children or youths. Where parents were once portrayed as accomplices to their children's conversion, by the twelfth century they were increasingly authorities against whom young converts revolted.[31] Francis of Assisi was, and perhaps remains, the exemplar of such 'adolescent' conversions. He led a dissolute life as a young man until he received divine vocation. Thereafter, he sold his possessions and gave his money to a church. When confronted by his angry father, Francis stripped and turned naked to the shelter of the Church in the person of the bishop and his cloak.[32] This trope was so powerful that we know of at least one *Vita* portraying a saint, who became a nun with her parents' cooperation, as having rebelled and run away from them in order to convert.[33]

Jacob, Catherine, and Elizabeth's conversions reflected these assumptions about children and conversions. These three share the capriciousness and pliancy that medieval commentators assigned to children and youths. Yet the very qualities that made children and youths unwelcome in the monastery made these young Jews welcome in the Church. Moreover, their narratives were, like the saints' *Vitae*, didactic, and not consistently reliable as historical sources. Thus, Jacob of Regensburg's conversion narrative in the *Annals of Egmond*, which was written at a monastery on the North Sea in the late 1170s, bears the marks of hearsay, contrivance, and confection. The chronicler claimed to have the story 'from the mouth of a certain, very well-known, Jew-Christian from the same well-known city'.[34] He concluded his narrative with the baptism of the city's Jewish

[30] Guibert de Nogent, *Autobiographie*, ed. by Labande, I. 15–17, pp. 106–44; Rupert of Deutz, *Commentariorum in Duodecim Prophetas Minores*, ed. by Migne, I. 1, col. 816; Rupert of Deutz, *Commentariorum in Cantica Canticarum*, ed. by Migne, bk VI, col. 936; Van Engen, *Rupert of Deutz*, pp. 50–55.

[31] Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society*, pp. 45–66, 124–35. Saints' *Lives*, like exempla, depended on tropes and conventions to illustrate sanctity. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, pp. 3–15, 28–37, 123–320; Kieckhefer, 'Conventions and Conversion'; Morse, *Truth and Convention in the Middle Ages*, pp. 128, 147–48.

[32] Thomas de Celano, *Vita prima S. Francisci Assiensis*.

[33] L'Hermite-Leclercq, 'Roseline, Jeanne et Jeanne-Diane', pp. 136–37, 150.

[34] *Annales Egmondi*, ed. by Pertz: 'quam ex ore cuiusdam iudei christiani eiusdem civitatis notissimi certissime comperimus'. Also see Haverkamp, 'Baptised Jews in German Lands', pp. 279–82.

population, an event that is nowhere else attested to have occurred.[35] Similarly, there are two pairs of narratives that share plots, but they differ enough in their details to suggest shared interests, not shared information. The same anonymous *Annals of Egmond* and Caesarius of Heisterbach's *Dialogue of Miracles* related similar stories about a Jewish girl (*puella*), who converted after a dalliance with a young cleric. The *Annals* placed events in the Rhineland, far from the monastery of Egmond, whereas Caesarius, writing in the Rhineland in the 1220s, set the story in England. In both narratives the cleric seduced the Jewish girl and arranged to meet her on the Friday before Easter. Her father found them together. Two days later he entered the cathedral with a retinue of Jews, bent on publicly denouncing the cleric. When the cleric saw the girl's irate father, he repented, and the Jews were miraculously struck dumb.[36] Yet the two narratives differ noticeably on other points. According to the annalist, the bishop demanded an explanation from the Jews for their presence. Upon hearing it, the annalist declared that the Jews and Christians alike glorified Christ.[37] In Caesarius's *Dialogue* the bishop was the cleric's uncle. Rather than asking the Jews for an explanation he expelled them from the church. The cleric later confessed to the bishop privately and was advised to marry the girl, 'lawfully reborn through the grace of baptism'.[38] Caesarius did not bother to inform his readers whether the girl's conversion was her own decision or the bishop's. She converted, apparently without cavil, and became a sincere Christian, who later joined the Cistercians with her husband.[39] Caesarius's version illustrates the story's didactic purposes: to reinforce the proper boundaries between Jews and Christians; to highlight the importance of clerical celibacy; to emphasize the power of penitence; and to illustrate the triumph of Christianity.[40] Or, as Caesarius phrased it: 'notice how much good contrition did in this man. It rectified his lapse; it made the Jews speechless; [and] it raised an

[35] *Annales Egmondi*, ed. by Pertz, p. 455.

[36] *Annales Egmondi*, ed. by Pertz, p. 449; Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum*, ed. by Strange, II. 23 (I, 93). See Haverkamp's comparison of the two narratives in 'Baptised Jews in German Lands', pp. 269–71.

[37] *Annales Egmondi*, ed. by Pertz, p. 459.

[38] Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum*, ed. by Strange, 2.2 (I, 93): 'Episcopus, domni misercordiam admirans et glorificans, tum pro magnitudine miraculi tum pro poenitentia cognati, eidem suasit ac persuasit, ut puellam a se defloratam, per baptismi gratiam renovatam legitime duceret, malens illum sicut vir pius et iustus, ecclesiasticis carere beneficiis, quam illam multis expositam periculis in paternis manere delicitis.'

[39] Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum*, ed. by Strange, 2.23 (I, 93–94).

[40] Marcus, 'Images of the Jews'; Haverkamp, 'Baptised Jews in German Lands', pp. 279–85.

infidel girl to the faith'.[41] It is entirely possible, indeed probable, that such stories were circulating in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, as Alfred Haverkamp has argued,[42] but these authors bent whatever tales they had heard to their own purposes.

The exempla converts were paragons, not case studies. Jacob of Regensburg's conversion, as it is relayed in the *Annals of Egmond*, encapsulates their conventions. Jacob converted spontaneously, adamantly, and irrevocably as a boy or a youth (the author calls him both a *puer* and a *iuvenis*). The son of a wealthy Jew named Isaac, Jacob was 'a secret lover of Christianity from the cradle'.[43] When his father left town Jacob seized the opportunity, and some of his father's wealth, and went to an archdeacon seeking baptism.[44] The archdeacon took charge of Jacob's funds but deferred his baptism, and then informed Jacob's father about his son's intentions. Jacob's parents attempted to dissuade their son but Jacob, according to the annalist, 'directed his sighs and vows to the son of the blessed Virgin Mary'.[45] Jacob's obstinacy angered his father so much that Isaac drowned his son in the Danube. After Jacob was, effectively, baptized by martyrdom, Jacob's body was found displaying signs of sanctity so unmistakable that the Christian community immediately hailed him as a saint, although they did not know who he was or how he had died.[46] After Jacob's identity was established by the Jewish community and the circumstances of his death were revealed by Isaac, Jacob was enshrined in a church by Regensburg's bishop. His relics performed such miracles, the annalist concluded, that the entire Jewish community, Jacob's parents included, converted.[47]

[41] Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum*, ed. by Strange, 2.23 (1, 93): 'Ecce vides, quantum boni operata sit in hoc homine contritio. Lapsum erexit, Judaeos elingues fecit, puellam infidelem ad fidem provexit.'

[42] Haverkamp, 'Baptised Jews in German Lands', p. 270.

[43] *Annales Egmondi*, ed. by Pertz, p. 454: 'Erat ibi Iudeus quidam dives plurimi argenti et auri, positisque in fenore nummis, qui habebat filium aetate iuvenem, vultu decorem moribus compositum et christianae fidei ab ipsis cunabulis occultum amatorem.'

[44] *Annales Egmondi*, ed. by Pertz, p. 454. Jacob's inheritance would have been legally forfeit. Converts from Judaism were not allowed, under imperial law, to keep the wealth they had possessed as Jews. *Kaiserkunden*, ed. by Von Gladiss, nos 411 and 412, pp. 547, 548; Haverkamp, 'Baptised Jews in German Lands', p. 274.

[45] *Annales Egmondi*, ed. by Pertz, p. 455: 'Cotidie blandiciis, cotidie minis pater cum matre puerum a fide Christi avertere temptabat, sed ille immobilis ad filium beatae virginis Mariae vota et suspira sua convertebat.'

[46] *Annales Egmondi*, ed. by Pertz, p. 455.

[47] *Annales Egmondi*, ed. by Pertz, p. 455.

Elizabeth of Linz was, like Jacob, a natural candidate for conversion. As a three-year-old girl (*puella*) she was 'divinely moved by a desire for baptism'.[48] She went to a Christian woman and intimated that she wanted to be baptized. The woman persuaded the girl to go to Conrad, a local knight, and explain her wish. Conrad promised the girl that he would provide counsel, assistance, and temporal aid. Then, on the day of her baptism, the girl also asked Conrad to shield her from her father, whom she feared would attempt to dissuade her. Thus secured, the girl was baptized and christened Elizabeth.[49] A few days later, Elizabeth's mother approached the girl and told her to return to Judaism. When Elizabeth protested that she could not because 'I have been made a Christian', her mother offered to undo her baptism.[50] After Elizabeth's mother described how this was to be effected (by pulling her through a latrine three times), the girl spit on her mother and fled.[51] Despite this emphatic renunciation, Elizabeth was not left to her own devices by Conrad or Caesarius. According to Caesarius, Conrad raised the girl as a daughter and intended to marry her to a Christian or to place her in a monastery.[52]

Catherine of Louvain followed a similar path to conversion and the convent in Caesarius's *Dialogue of Miracles* and Thomas of Cantimpré's *The Universal Good Concerning Bees*. Although Catherine has the strongest claim to an actual existence,[53] her narrative was undeniably shaped by the interests of her authors. Both emphasized her childishness and innate Christianness, but Caesarius gave the story a Cistercian slant, while Thomas injected a strain of Marian piety into the narrative.

According to Caesarius, Catherine was the young daughter (*filia parvula*) of a Jew who regularly debated with the chaplain to the Duke of Brabant, Rainier. Catherine listened to these arguments and 'was gradually instructed in the Catholic faith through divine arrangement'.[54] In not so subtle contrast to her

[48] Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum*, ed. by Strange, 2.26 (I, 98): 'In villa nobis vicina, quae Linse dicitur, infra hoc triennium quaedam puella Judaei cuiusdam filia, baptismi desiderio divinitus accensa.'

[49] Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum*, ed. by Strange, 2.26 (I, 98).

[50] Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum*, ed. by Strange, 2.26 (I, 98): 'Non possum, quia Christiana sum effecta.'

[51] Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum*, ed. by Strange, 2.26 (I, 98).

[52] Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum*, ed. by Strange, 2.26 (I, 98).

[53] A nun named Catherine who had once been a Jew is mentioned in a seventeenth-century copy of a charter of donation from 1270; see Kleinberg, 'A Thirteenth-Century Struggle over Custody', p. 55 n. 19; and Brouette, 'La Cistercienne Catherine de Louvain'.

[54] Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum*, ed. by Strange, 2.25 (I, 96): 'Sicque

father, Catherine then asked to be baptized. A woman took the girl (*puella*) from her parents' house, and Rainier baptized her. He then placed Catherine in the Cistercian monastery of Parc-aux-Dames. When Catherine's father discovered her defection he tried to recover her with the aid of the Duke of Brabant and the Bishop of Louvain, over the strident protests of the local Cistercians and of Catherine herself. When her family came to see her Catherine complained of a 'Jewish stench'; and when she learned of her parents' presence, Catherine declared, 'that is the stench which I smelled, I will not see them'.[55] When she was called before an episcopal synod, over Cistercian objections, to answer her father's claims that her baptism was invalid, Catherine insisted that her baptism was legitimate and her father was lying when he said that she had been seized and violently baptized.[56] Caesarius wrote that Catherine's fate was, as yet, undecided but had been referred to the papacy, a point not corroborated by the papal registers.[57] Caesarius, nonetheless, seemed confident of Catherine's continuing conversion in the cloister. He concluded that a love of money, not zeal for justice, moved the bishop to take Catherine's father's part, otherwise he 'never would compel a baptized girl, a virgin sealed to Christ, and fervent in the Christian religion, indeed beyond her age, to return to the Jewish perfidy'.[58]

Thomas of Cantimpré's narrative follows a similar trajectory but emphasizes the role of the Virgin Mary in forwarding the girl's conversion. According to Thomas, before her baptism, Catherine was a Jewish girl named Rachel, living in Cologne. She became devoted to the Virgin Mary by the age of five.[59] After her family moved to Louvain, Catherine began playing with Christian children. With these playmates, she visited Rainier, a priest. Noting her frequent visits,

sensim per diuinam dispositionem imbuebatur ad fidem catholicam.'

[55] Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum*, ed. by Strange, 2.25 (I, 96): 'Ecce iste est foetor quem sensi. Non videbo illos.'

[56] Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum*, ed. by Strange, 2.25 (I, 96–97). Catherine's baptism was legally questionable. Jewish children were not to be taken from their homes and baptized without their parents' consent. *Kaiserkunden*, ed. by Von Gladiss, nos 411 and 412, pp. 547–48. See also Kleinberg, 'A Thirteenth-Century Struggle over Custody', pp. 51–67.

[57] Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum*, ed. by Strange, 2.25 (I, 97).

[58] Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum*, ed. by Strange, 2.25 (I, 97–98): 'Quibus minime creditur, quia si agitaretur stimulis iustitiae, nequaquam cogeret puellam baptizatam, virginem Christo consignatam et in religione Christiana, etiam supra aetatem, ferventem, ad Judaicam redire perfidiam.'

[59] Thomas of Cantimpré, *Bonum universale*, II. 29. 10, pp. 295–96. See also, Kleinberg, 'A Thirteenth-Century Struggle over Custody', pp. 55–56.

Rainier asked if Rachel wanted to be made a Christian.[60] Rachel replied that she would, if Rainier would instruct her in the tenets of Christianity. After a year and a half of instruction Rachel heard that she was to be sent away and immediately asked to be baptized. She arranged to run away, but her accomplice was not Rainier but the Virgin Mary. When Rachel was in danger of sleeping through her assignation, Mary came to her in a dream, called her Catherine, and chastised the girl for oversleeping. Rachel went to Rainier, who took her to the monastery, where she was baptized and given the name Catherine in deference to her dream.[61] As in Caesarius's account, her father immediately sought to reclaim Catherine with the collusion of local prelates. Catherine cried, prayed, and then went to court. Before an ecclesiastical court she 'confounded and moved with truthful reason' the attendant prelates so effectively (and affectively) that they 'saw clearly'.[62] Thomas added, however, that the legal issues were not resolved for another two years. Still, Catherine remained a nun and continued to resist her family's efforts to draw her back to Judaism.[63] Indeed, Catherine emerges as a more stalwart Christian than most of the narrative's priests.

It is possible that a Jewish girl was baptized and brought to the monastery of Parc-aux-Dames, or brought to the monastery and baptized there, before she was quite seven years old. Yet whatever happened in all likelihood did not happen as either Caesarius or Thomas described it.[64] In these tales, Catherine and her fellow converts were exemplars, models of what their authors thought Jewish converts should be; and Caesarius, Thomas, and the annalist evidently thought that Jewish converts should be young. Childish capriciousness and youthful wilfulness furthered the conversions of Jacob, Catherine, and Elizabeth, allowing them to turn swiftly and absolutely to Christianity. Even carnality, which was otherwise a liability, facilitated the conversions of Jewish girls. Her sexuality quite obviously brought the Jewish girl whom the young cleric seduced into the Church. There is also a faint undercurrent of seduction in Rainier's persuasion of Catherine and Conrad's protection of Elizabeth. Most crucially, however, their youthful-

[60] Thomas of Cantimpré, *Bonum universale*, II. 29. 10, p. 296.

[61] Thomas of Cantimpré, *Bonum universale*, II. 29. 10, pp. 297–98.

[62] Thomas of Cantimpré, *Bonum universale*, II. 29. 10, pp. 298–99: 'Vt enim die quadam apud Leodium venit coram episcopo, clericis, et magnatibus, diuersos aduocatos et iudices, tam constanti, quam veridica ratione confudit et mouit; vt voces vlulantium et clamantium cum lacrymis prae stupore in Ecclesia sancti Lamberti a locis distantissimis audirentur: ita vt omnes manifeste discernerent et viderent, in tam exili aetate diuini spiritus sapientiam praeualere.'

[63] Thomas of Cantimpré, *Bonum universale*, II. 29. 10, pp. 298–99.

[64] Kleinberg, 'A Thirteenth-Century Struggle over Custody', pp. 51–62.

ness made Catherine, Elizabeth, and Jacob impressionable and pliant. Whether through martyrdom, the monastery, or marriage, all three were moulded so completely into Christians that they found Jews or Judaism noxious, scorned their parents' efforts to reconvert them, and openly derided their parents.

These rosy images of child converts stand in stark contrast to the growing concerns about adult converts from Judaism within Christian circles. Beginning in the twelfth century, Christian authors voiced doubts about adult Jews' ability to put off their former lives and selves.[65] The children of the exempla sidestepped the apparent pitfalls of incomplete conversion because of their inherent impressionability. Moreover, because they were children, they were raised as Christians by Christians after their baptisms and were not bound by ties of spouses, careers, or children to their former communities. Thus, although children and youths were less desirable as religious converts, they were preferable as converts from Judaism.

Jewish pedagogues and poets shared many of their Christian counterparts' presuppositions about children and youth. Young Jewish children were also deemed malleable, and young men, who stood between the impressionability of childhood and the stability of maturity, worrisome.[66] Jewish authorities seem to have, consequently, feared that children and youths were especially vulnerable to apostasy. Susan Einbinder, for example, has argued that rabbis depicted Jewish martyrs' deaths in vivid and gory detail in order to cultivate a 'visceral revulsion' for Christianity among their students.[67] Likewise, the *Sefer Chasidim* (*Book of the Pious*), the work of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Jewish pietists, intimates a special anxiety about the potential for apostasy among the very young. The *Sefer Chasidim* advises the parents of an apostate to stop trying to convince him to reconvert, because he was using these encounters to entice his siblings into mixing with gentiles.[68] It also recommends that a penitent apostate should reconvert anyone, particularly any children, whom he had led astray before being readmitted to the Jewish community.[69]

[65] There are several examples of Christian authors claiming that a Jewish convert, or even the descendent of a Jewish convert, was somehow tainted by Judaism. See Sherwood, 'Jewish Conversion', pp. 101–04, 303–15; and Elukin, 'The Eternal Jew in Medieval Europe'; and Elukin, 'From Jew to Christian?'

[66] Cooper, 'On the Social Role of Biblical Interpretation', pp. 180–84, 187; Judah ha-Levi, trans. by Roth, '"The Ages of Man" in Two Medieval Hebrew Poems', pp. 40–41; Horrowitz, 'The Worlds of Jewish Youth', pp. 86–87.

[67] Einbinder, *Beautiful Death*, p. 113.

[68] Judah ben Samuel, *Sefer Chasidim*, trans. by Finkel, 188, pp. 294–95. Unfortunately, no other information about the apostate or the circumstances of his conversion are provided.

[69] Judah ben Samuel, *Sefer Chasidim*, trans. by Finkel, 198, p. 350.

Herman-Judah and Guillaume de Flaix bear out, to a certain extent, the monks' and the rabbis' shared assumptions that younger converts could be more readily Christianized than their elders. Both men were comparatively young at the time of their baptisms; both joined religious communities; and both wrote about conversion. In their texts they discussed what it meant to convert in one's youth. Herman-Judah, baptized in 1127 or 1129 at the age of twenty-one, became a Premonstratensian canon and wrote a history of his conversion.[70] He positioned it at the intersection between youth and adulthood and suggested that his age was a significant factor in his conversion. Guillaume was baptized as a child of five or six and, like most child converts, was not a willing one.[71] He nevertheless became a pious Benedictine monk and wrote a series of biblical commentaries in which he treated conversion and youth, among other topics.

As a young man of twenty, one of the biblically mandated ages of majority, Herman-Judah lent a considerable sum to the Bishop of Münster without securing the appropriate collateral.[72] When he returned to Cologne, his family and friends chastised him for this impolitic action. They counselled Herman-Judah to go back to Münster and to remain there until the Bishop had repaid his loan.[73] Despite the autonomy that landed him this trouble, Herman-Judah's text betrays a certain tension between autonomy and dependence.[74] His parents, rather shrewdly given subsequent events, sent Herman-Judah in the care of a former tutor, Baruch, 'lest as it happened, remaining constantly with Christians, by their instigation, I should turn away from the emulation of my paternal tradition'.[75]

Herman-Judah, of course, did apostatize, a decision which he attributed in large measure to his youthful impressionability. At Münster, Herman-Judah wrote, 'allured by the friendly curiosity, indeed by the thoughtless presumption

[70] Morrison, 'Introduction to Herman-Judah's *Account*', pp. 41–42; Niemeyer, in her introduction to Herman-Judah, *Opusculum*, ed. by Niemeyer, pp. 1–67.

[71] On Guillaume, see Dahan, 'Guillaume de Flay', pp. 39–43; and Sherwood, 'A Convert of 1096'.

[72] Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood*, p. 118; Horrowitz, 'The Worlds of Jewish Youth', nn. 8, 10 (on pp. 336–37); Roth, '"The Ages of Man" in Two Medieval Hebrew Poems', p. 41.

[73] Herman-Judah, *Opusculum*, ed. by Niemeyer, c. 2, pp. 72–73.

[74] Compare Jordan, 'Adolescence and Conversion in the Middle Ages', pp. 85–86.

[75] Herman-Judah, *Opusculum*, ed. by Niemeyer, c. 2, p. 73: 'Timentes autem ne, quod evenit, Christianis commanens eorum instinctu ab emulatione paterne traditionis averterer, grandevum quendam Iudeum Baruch nomine mercede conducunt et eius me pedagogio sollerti cura committunt.'

of the young (*adolescentes*)' he mingled regularly with Christians.[76] He listened to sermons; conversed, perhaps even ate, with Christians; visited churches; and debated with Rupert of Deutz. He also travelled to the Premonstratensian house at Cappenberg, where the canons' asceticism so impressed him that he began to wonder if Christianity or Judaism offered the surer path to God, starting him on the path to conversion.[77] He began to pray and to fast, and to debate with Christians in search of revelation and certainty. In implicit contrast to Herman-Judah's youthful self, Baruch, who also lived in close proximity to Christians, never betrayed an interest in Christianity. Rather, the older man ineffectually scolded Herman-Judah for consorting with Christians.[78] Adult obligations had brought Herman-Judah into the orbit of Christians, and once there his relative youth made him susceptible to Christianity.

Herman-Judah further exploited this tension between youth and adulthood by mapping his conversion process onto his maturation. Throughout his narrative, Herman-Judah used rites of majority and maturity as mile markers in his conversion. Thus Herman-Judah opened his account with a dream he had at thirteen and closed it with his adult interpretation of it. Recent scholars have repeatedly described, unpacked, and interpreted this dream, so I will not delve into it here.[79] For Herman-Judah, the dream was important because he had it at a liminal age and because of the liminal state it foretold.[80] When he awoke, Herman-Judah informed his readers that 'although I was a boy, I did not judge with childish frivolity these unusual things'.[81] However, he could not then interpret the dream. The dream, in Karl Morrison's phrase, opened a 'hermeneutic gap' which

[76] Herman-Judah, *Opusculum*, ed. by Niemeyer, c. 2, p. 73: 'In quo temporis spatio cum sepius, ut solebat, commissis sibi ovibus pabulum verbi Dei bonus ille pastor administraret, ego amica adolescentibus curiositate illectus earundem me ovium gregi admiscui.' On Herman-Judah and Rupert of Deutz, see Abulafia, 'The Ideology of Reform and the Jews', p. 51.

[77] Herman-Judah, *Opusculum*, ed. by Niemeyer, c. 6, pp. 88–93.

[78] Herman-Judah, *Opusculum*, ed. by Niemeyer, c. 2, c. 7, pp. 76, 93.

[79] Blumenkranz, 'Jüdische und christliche Konvertiten', pp. 275–76; Cohen, 'The Mentality of the Medieval Jewish Apostate', p. 34; Jordan, 'Adolescence and Conversion in the Middle Ages', pp. 84–86; Momigliano, 'Medieval Jewish Autobiography'; Kleinberg, 'Hermannus Judaeus's Opusculum', pp. 338–39; Saltman, 'Hermann's *Opusculum de conversione sua*', pp. 33–34; Schmitt, *La Conversion d'Hermann le juif*, pp. 89–100.

[80] Jordan, 'Adolescence and Conversion in the Middle Ages', p. 85.

[81] Herman-Judah, *Opusculum*, ed. by Niemeyer, c. 1, p. 71: 'In huius itaque visionis iocunditate evigilans, licet puer essem, non tamen levitate puerili ea que tam insolita videram, inania esse iudicavi, sed magnum aliquid ratus eorum mihi portendi presagio.'

Herman-Judah closed in his narrative's final chapter.[82] After he was ordained, Herman-Judah claimed, he was capable of understanding his portentous dream for the first time. Although this dream is not, as Aviad Kleinberg notes, terrifically conducive to Christian hermeneutic, Herman-Judah managed to read it as an allegory for his eventual conversion and acceptance into Christianity.[83] His newly won status as a priest, he implied, cemented his conversion and allowed him to see that his dream signified the grace of baptism, the unity of the Church, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Eucharist, and the gospels.

Herman-Judah set his marriage, an important rite of maturity within many Jewish communities,[84] squarely in the centre of his narrative. In the tenth of the work's twenty-one chapters, Herman-Judah described how he was confronted by the irate father of his fiancée, who insisted that he set a date for his nuptials. Although he tried to put off his future father-in-law, Herman-Judah eventually acceded to his demands, rather than endure excommunication from the Jewish community.[85] According to Herman-Judah, shortly after his marriage, the pleasures of the flesh and affection for his wife blinded him. He left off his debates with Christians, prayers, fasting, and search for spiritual certainty.[86] This interlude represents the narrative's nadir, but also its turning point. After three months of domestic bliss, Herman-Judah was struck with contrition. He returned to his debates with Christians but not to the stasis that had characterized his earlier pursuit of certainty.[87] He began to cross himself, a more obviously Christian gesture than the fasting he had previously undertaken in an attempt to coax divine revelation. He also sought out the intercession of two Christian women whose prayers, Herman-Judah assured his readers, proved efficacious.[88] However negatively Herman-Judah portrayed his marriage, it was central to his conversion.

Guillaume de Flaix, like Herman-Judah, was a Jewish convert who wrote about what it meant to convert *in adolescentia*. He was, however, a very different sort of convert. Baptized under duress as a child of five or six, Guillaume was

[82] Morrison, 'Introduction to Herman-Judah's *Account*', pp. 47–49.

[83] Kleinberg, 'Hermannus Judaeus's Opusculum', p. 338; Herman-Judah, *Opusculum*, ed. by Niemeyer, c. 20, p. 122.

[84] Horrowitz, 'The Worlds of Jewish Youth', pp. 87, 93–96; Roth, '"The Ages of Man" in Two Medieval Hebrew Poems'.

[85] Herman-Judah, *Opusculum*, ed. by Niemeyer, c. 10, p. 98.

[86] Herman-Judah, *Opusculum*, ed. by Niemeyer, c. 10, p. 102.

[87] Herman-Judah, *Opusculum*, ed. by Niemeyer, c. 11, p. 103.

[88] Herman-Judah, *Opusculum*, ed. by Niemeyer, c. 12, pp. 106–08.

among the Jews herded into a church in Rouen in 1096 by crusaders who threatened to kill anyone who refused to be baptized.[89] He was taken from his mother by a Christian nobleman, one Guillaume d'Eu. Guillaume d'Eu took the boy to his own mother, Helisande, and she asked the child if he wished to become a Christian. The boy, afraid that he would suffer his co-religionists' fate, did not refuse, and so was baptized.[90] He was given the name of his rescuer *cum* kidnapper, Guillaume. According to Guibert, this conversion was an unusual success.[91] For Helisande saw to it that Guillaume was raised as a Christian; and 'because she feared that he might be recalled to his original [state] by his parents, buried him in the monastery of Flaix'.[92] Unfortunately, little else is known about Guillaume or his subsequent career as a monk. According to Guibert, Guillaume was an apt student of Latin, grammar, and the monastic life.[93] He may also have been one of the two boys knocked down by lightning, which figured as one of the monastery's disasters and punishments for laxity in Guibert's autobiography.[94] Otherwise, Guibert reports only that he sent Guillaume a copy of his polemical treatise against the Jews, which Guibert claimed inspired Guillaume to write his own treatise.[95] No such text survives, but Guillaume wrote extant commentaries on Lamentations, Proverbs, Judges, and Deuteronomy, and thirteen homilies.[96]

[89] Guibert de Nogent, *Autobiographie*, ed. by Labande, II. 5, p. 246. See also, Golb, *Les Juifs de Rouen au Moyen Âge*, p. 77.

[90] Guibert de Nogent, *Autobiographie*, ed. by Labande, II. 5, p. 248.

[91] Guibert de Nogent, *Autobiographie*, ed. by Labande, II. 5, p. 252. Guibert, it should be noted, was not terribly sanguine about the possibility of convincing Jews to convert. Guibert de Nogent, *Tractatus de Incarnatione*, ed. by Migne, III. 11, col. 528; and Abulafia, *Jews and Christians in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance*, p. 87.

[92] Guibert de Nogent, *Autobiographie*, ed. by Labande, II. 5, p. 250: 'et quia ne a suis ad pristina revocaretur parentibus metuebat, Flaviacensi eum intulit coenobio'. Helisande, presumably, had quite practical reasons for doing so. Guillaume was baptized in Normandy and the King of England gave the Jews of Rouen permission to revert. St Germer-de-Flaix is outside of Normandy, in the neighbouring diocese of Beauvais.

[93] Guibert de Nogent, *Autobiographie*, ed. by Labande, II. 5, p. 250.

[94] Guibert de Nogent, *Autobiographie*, ed. by Labande, I. 23, p. 186.

[95] Guibert de Nogent, *Autobiographie*, ed. by Labande, II. 5, p. 252. See also Ziolkowski, 'Put in No-Man's Land', p. 115.

[96] Most of Guillaume's writings remain unpublished. His commentary on Proverbs survives in a single copy in München, BSB, MS Clm 10056, fols 74^{r}–140^{v} (henceforth *Expos. Prov.*, München, BSB, MS Clm 10056). He also composed a commentary on Lamentations, extant in BnF, MS lat. 575 (hereafter *Expos. Lamen.*, BnF, MS lat. 575). Two other commentaries, on Deuteronomy and Judges, survive in Paris, Bibl. Mazarine, MS 771, fols 73^{v}–76^{v} and 78^{v}–85^{r}

These works are not autobiographical, but Guillaume often turned to questions of conversion during youth and childhood within them.

Guillaume regularly identified the early stages of conversion with *adolescentia*, using the latter as a metaphor for the former. He wrote, for example, that there are two youths, one of the body and one of the soul, for which age was irrelevant.[97] Moreover, Guillaume implicitly equated profession with conversion,[98] and profession for an oblate like Guillaume would have occurred around the age of fifteen, at the outset of *adolescentia*.[99] However, Guillaume was dubious about *adolescentes* and young converts, far more so than Herman-Judah. In Guillaume's writings, a young man and a new convert alike are pliant, but also prone to pride, lasciviousness, fickleness, worldly concerns, and backsliding if not given proper guidance. He wrote that to pass into the youth of the soul, that is to begin to convert, requires abandoning all that characterizes the youth of the body, 'but the youth of the body is disposed to embracing the world, prone to play, haughtier in pride, more vulnerable to licentiousness, in short, inconstant in all their ways'.[100] He concluded that it was, therefore, impossible to know if a young man's conversion would end well. Many youths, he wrote, began with great zeal but became tepid in their conversion.[101]

Although an adolescent conversion was not apparently ideal, a monastic upbringing was. Guillaume wrote that a youth who subdues his mind to the yoke of the monastery, accustoms himself to it, and 'is tried in the exercise of virtue; when he becomes a man, he has been tempered by holy custom to be good, to carry the divine yoke'.[102] Guillaume thus implied that a monastic education and

respectively. This manuscript also contains copies of all of the homilies attributed to Guillaume. Guillaume's commentary on Judges has been published in Dahan, 'Guillaume de Flay'.

[97] Guillaume, *Expos. Lamen.*, BnF, MS lat. 575, fols 83^{v}–84^{r}, 120^{v}; Guillaume, *Expos. Prov.*, München, BSB, MS Clm 10056, fol. 129^{v}.

[98] Guillaume, *Expos. Prov.*, München, BSB, MS Clm 10056, fol. 79^{r}; see Guillaume, *Expos. Lamen.*, BnF, MS lat. 575, fols 83^{v}–84^{r}, 120^{v}; Guillaume, *Expos. Prov.*, München, BSB, MS Clm 10056, 84^{r}, 102^{v}–103^{r}.

[99] See Cochelin's article in this volume. For discussions of the systems defining the stages of life, see Cochelin's introduction in this volume and Sears, *The Ages of Man*, pp. 57–65.

[100] Guillaume, *Expos. Prov.*, München, BSB, MS Clm 10056, fol. 129^{v}: 'Adolescentia uero corporis procliuis est in amplectendo mundum, prona ad ludum, erectior ad superbiam, fragilis ad lasciuiam; inconstans denique in omnibus uiis suis.'

[101] Guillaume, *Expos. Prov.*, München, BSB, MS Clm 10056, fol. 129^{v}.

[102] Guillaume, *Expos. Lamen.*, BnF, MS lat. 575, fol. 83^{v}: 'Bonum bonum est uiro, cum portauerit iugum ab adolescentia sua, et de aetatis corporeae [sic] potest hoc intelligi adolescentia, in qua qui iugo diuini seruitii tenere mentis subdiderit colla, crescenti aetati assuefaciens

upbringing could effectively transform one; indeed, could more effectively turn a child into a good monk and a Jewish convert into a good Christian than a conscious decision to convert.

Guillaume and, to a lesser extent, Herman-Judah illustrate just how effective monastic discipline could be. Herman-Judah in the decades between his baptism and his account absorbed enough of Christianity that several modern scholars have posited that his narrative was the work of a lifelong Christian or Christians, rather than a former Jew.[103] Guillaume, baptized at a younger age, even more vividly exemplifies the role that age could play in Christianization. Guillaume's homilies dedicated to Mary and Christ placed him on the cutting edge of Christian devotional piety in the first half of the twelfth century.[104] Guillaume also did what no other Jewish convert did; he openly and intimately criticized the Church. He complained about hypocrisy, deceit, laxity, immodesty, idleness, and arrogance among clerics, monks, and prelates, lamenting that 'the stronghold of King David, that is of the contemplative life, lay in ruins' while dishonest men are 'lying to God with their habit[s] of religion'.[105] Guillaume's biting criticisms of the Church stand in sharp relief to the more restrained murmurings of Herman-Judah. Herman-Judah restricted his chastisements to Christians' disdain for Jews, which did little, and he chided his readers to forward conversion.[106] Next to Herman-Judah's critique, Guillaume's ringing calls for reform and repentance are unequivocally those of a monk who has completely absorbed the *mores* and the anxieties of his community.

uirtutum exercitur cum fuerit uir factus sancta consuetudine experietur esse bonum portare dominicum iugum.'

[103] Saltman, 'Hermann's *Opusculum de conversione sua*', p. 37 n. 28; Blumenkranz, 'Jüdische und christliche Konvertiten', pp. 275–78; Schmitt, 'La Mémoire des Prémontrés'; Schmitt, *La Conversion d'Hermann le juif*, pp. 35–61.

[104] Constable, *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought*, p. 209. See Guillaume's 'De castitatis caude', in Paris, Bibl. Mazarine, MS 771, fols 62^{v}–64^{r}; Guillaume, *Expos. Lamen*., BnF, MS lat. 575, fol. 37^{v}; 'In Assumptione Beatae Mariae', in Paris, Bibl. Mazarine, MS 771, fols 64^{r}–66^{v}; Guillaume, 'In Nativitate Domini', in Paris, Bibl. Mazarine, MS 771, fols 102^{r}–104^{r}.

[105] Guillaume, *Expos. Lamen*., BnF, MS lat. 575, fol. 122^{v}: 'Sic prohpudor [*sic*] mons syon arx regis David, id est ordo contemplative uitae [*sic*] disperiit, dum ubi filii regni excerbantur in eo quod ait dominus, uacate et uidete quoniam ego sum deus, ibi ambulant uulpes, id est fraudulenti servantes fidem saeculo per habitum religionis mentientes deo.' Guillaume, *Expos. Lamen*., BnF, MS lat. 575, fols 9^{v}, 55^{v}–56^{r}, 61^{r}–61^{v}, 62^{v}, 75^{r}, 111^{r}, 116^{r}–117^{v}. Guillaume, *Expos. Prov*., München, BSB, MS Clm 10056, fols 116^{r}–117^{v}.

[106] Herman-Judah, *Opusculum*, ed. by Niemeyer, c. 5, pp. 86–87.

Herman-Judah and Guillaume de Flaix, despite the differences in their ages and their conversions, portrayed young converts and young monks as more plastic than their elders, and themselves demonstrated that younger converts were indeed more readily moulded into Christians. Similar assumptions about children and youths informed the narratives on Catherine of Louvain, Jacob of Regensburg, and Elizabeth of Linz. Jewish children and youths were not more prone to convert, but there seems to have been wide agreement that they could be more easily and completely moulded into Christians. This consensus seems to have been born, not of childish conversions, but of medieval understandings of childhood and youth and hagiographic archetypes for converting. Thus, although the majority of actual Jewish converts were adults, the hope and the fear that Jewish children could become Christians reverberated through Jewish–Christian relations throughout the late Middle Ages. The intense anxiety about their children, arguably, shaped Jewish responses to forcible baptism. Rachel of Mainz killed her four children and then herself rather than submit to baptism and lose her children to Christians.[107] Such fears may also explain why Oxford's and Norwich's Jews kidnapped children bound for the baptismal fount, at such obvious risks to themselves.[108] This shared assumption about young converts' susceptibility also shaped Christian responses to Jews. Jewish children often had an important part to play in Christian tales of ritual murder and host desecration, in which they were almost invariably more inclined to convert than their fathers at the story's conclusion.[109] Likewise, the spectre of the pliant Jewish child informs later arguments in favour of compelling Jews to convert and baptizing Jewish children without their parents' consent. Among the reasons that John Duns Scotus offered for Christian princes to coerce their Jewish subjects into baptism was the argument that although the parents would not be faithful Christians, their descendants would be.[110] Comparably, in 1502 the crown of Spain expelled Muslim women over the age of twelve and Muslim men over fourteen, under the supposition that minors could be raised as Christians outside of

[107] *Mainz Anonymous* and the *Chronicle of Solomon bar Simson*, translated in Chazan, *European Jewry and the First Crusade*, Appendix S, pp. 238–39; Appendix L, pp. 258–60; See also, Cohen, *Sanctifying the Name of God*, pp. 106–29.

[108] *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III*, ed. by Martin and others, III, 353, 383; Stacey, 'The Conversion of Jews', pp. 270–71; and see above.

[109] For a short summary of children's portrayal in these stories, see Rubin, *Gentile Tales*, pp. 77–80.

[110] Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, ed. by Lauriola, bk VI, d. 4, q. 9 (II, 529–30).

the influence of their families.[111] The custody, consent, and conversion of Jewish children remained a contentious issue well into the eighteenth century. Bishops, theologians, lawyers, and even midwives surreptitiously baptized Jewish children, assigned custody to converting parents, or simply argued on occasion that Jewish children should be taken from their parents and baptized because they were seen playing with Christian children.[112] Thus, although not deeply informative about the nuances of Jewish conversions in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the dramatic narratives of Jacob, Catherine, Herman-Judah, and Elizabeth open a significant window into the period's Jewish–Christian relations.

[111] Meyerson, *The Muslims of Valencia*, p. 53.

[112] See Carlebach, *Divided Souls*, pp. 140–56.

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Generational Discourse and Images of Urban Youth in Private Letters: The Nuremberg Tucher Family around 1550

Christian Kuhn

Without sources originating from familial conflicts much of the 'invisible' value system and cultural imagination of the life cycle would be lost. The letters between fathers and sons of Nuremberg's Tucher family suggest that a particular image and perception of youth informed educational practice.[1] This family was part of the privileged patrician oligarchy that ruled the powerful Imperial City, a social distinction that even wealthier merchants did not enjoy. In the light of the sources available, the main focus here will be on Leonhart Tucher (1487–1568), the leader of a decisive political committee, which was called the Inner Council. Leonhart's sons Paulus (1524–1603), Gabriel (1526–88), Sixtus (1528–85), Herdegen (1533–1614), and Levin (1537–94) exchanged letters with him from different locations in Europe, including Lyon (France) and from towns in Spain. The archive suggests that letters of mothers to sons were written but were not preserved, while nothing is known of letters to and from sisters. The sources are therefore narrowly restricted to father–son communication of elite families. Letters analysed here

[1] Some two thousand letters written by members of the family are extant, and of these approximately two hundred are intergenerational (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV). Matthias Beer has demonstrated that the correspondence between Tucher fathers and sons is a particularly remarkable corpus in comparison to other familial archives: Beer, *Eltern und Kinder*. An earlier version of this analysis of the Tucher correspondence first appeared in print as Kuhn, 'Generational Discourse in Urban Youth Images'. It is with kind permission that Elsevier have granted the right to revise this material.

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Figure 6. Father-to-son letter exchange, pen drawing, the *Kleine Scheurl-Chronik* (entries 1570–1600), Nürnberg, Scheurl-Archiv, Germanisches Nationalmuseum. Reproduced with kind permission of Harald Fischer Verlag GmbH, Erlangen.

were mainly produced during the absence of the sons for apprenticeship in one of the European centres of trading goods relevant to Nuremberg's markets. Given that separation was motivated by business and education, the emotional authenticity of this material appears not to be the most promising object of analysis. However, the discourse analysis of this corpus can add to our knowledge about the general norms that underlined intergenerational communication.[2]

At the end of this study, the picture of youth transmitted by the private letters will be contextualized with a variety of texts and images made for pedagogical purposes, including one play destined for school and some *emblemata*. All three types of sources deal with the problems of youth in similar ways, enabling comparative study as a means to determine what writing a letter actually meant. The value that such an intertextual study of private letters has for historical anthropology needs to be re-evaluated. Letters were often written to impress certain points upon the recipient or could be apologetic by creating an image of the writer that conformed to the expectations of the recipient. Such letters therefore inform us

[2] More interested in the authentic elements of these fascinating letters is Ozment, *Three Behaim Boys*.

less about the author than about the values of his social milieu or that of his recipient. Indeed, despite the numerous rules and topoi guiding epistolary exchanges, contemporary letter-writing advice books seem to have highlighted that these rules were a mere tool; they seem to operate as a means to ease the transmission of the message contained in the letter.[3]

The image below comes from the *Kleine Scheurl-Chronik* and visually demonstrates how there was an awareness of the role that the epistolarly art form could play in the period in relation to negotiating some form of communication between the older and younger generations within families.

The education of merchant sons was based primarily on a particular representation of youth. A young male, 'ein Junger', was obliged to follow general norms that were relevant to the recipient's age group in particular. The evidence suggests that the image of youth was a stereotype that could even be applied by the seventy-three-year-old Leonhart Tucher to his thirty-seven-year-old son, Herdegen.[4] Therefore, rather than restricting this research to a clear-cut age group,[5] the generational gap between young and old in the family is best analysed as a cultural construct, an image of normality or, in even broader terms, a cultural pattern of how generations perceived one another.[6] Such a pursuit of the image of youth makes it possible to avoid essentialist positions of quantitative research as can be found in the statistical analyses of ancient or medieval societies.[7] The focus is therefore on why someone was denounced for being young or too young.

The Renaissance and the Reformation did not bring a rupture in the practices concerning apprenticeship, and continuity prevailed over change in the three centuries between 1400 and 1700.[8] Indeed, more generally, studies of the his-

[3] Beer, *Eltern und Kinder* (pp. 63–65), cites a very straightforward passage from one of the most influential letter manuals. The manual points out how the form is an instrument that is organized according to the letters' pragmatic functions and is by no means of static structure.

[4] On the fact that, in some medieval definitions of the life cycle, *iuventus* can indeed finish as late as forty-nine, see the introduction to this volume by Isabelle Cochelin. On the very fluid separation between youth and maturity, see the article in this volume by Deborah Youngs.

[5] Attempts to define the age group have not been successful on the whole, and not even for a specific social group. Besides the articles in this volume by Cochelin and Youngs, see also Berg, *Handbuch der deutschen Bildungsgeschichte*, I, 145.

[6] For a similar approach, see Taddei, '*Puerizia*, *adolescenza* and *giovinezza*'.

[7] Recently, ancient historians' enthusiasm for quantitative analysis seems to have faded: Rawson, *Children and Childhood in Roman Italy*. The methodology of sixteenth-century cultural historians has undergone similar changes: Loetz, 'How to Do Things with God'.

[8] Berg, *Handbuch der deutschen Bildungsgeschichte*, I, 135–53, esp. p. 145.

tory of education emphasize the continuity of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries despite the immense impact of the Reformation.[9] Social historian Brady has argued for a *longue durée* across the threshold of 1500.[10] Quite similarly, after major changes around 1300, the instructions regarding how a letter had to be written remained extremely conservative until the end of the sixteenth century.[11] The sources of this article, sixteenth-century letters dealing with issues related to apprenticeship, are therefore of broader relevance than a study on mid-sixteenth-century Nuremberg elite.

The potential of intergenerational letter exchanges as a source for family values will be demonstrated by one striking and detailed example. Then the results will be judged in comparison to a broader corpus of letters in order to demonstrate parallels as well as variations. This analysis will involve a discussion of the personal and subject-specific characteristics of private letters in light of the similar rhetoric on intergenerational relations found in the moral literature of the period. To conclude, the current acceptance of a 'generational turn' in the cultural history of premodern societies will be evaluated and the need for further research will be highlighted. The image of youth found in the Tuchers' letters is rather negative, while one could think of other contemporary primary sources providing a more positive image, but that would be a different topic from the one presented here.

A letter by Leonhart Tucher to his nineteen-year-old son, Sixtus IV Tucher (1528–85), a merchant apprentice in Lyon, was written because of considerable problems that had occurred. On 24 February 1547 the father set down a number of instructions relating to what his son should learn so that he might become a successful merchant. These instructions were then justified in essentialist ways. Leonhart pontificated about the responsibilities of youth: 'you should especially pursue what is appropriate for a young man, namely to improve and be industrious and to temper your emotions'.[12] Since the son was in Lyon he was not within

[9] Keck, 'Konfessionalisierung und Bildung', p. 12; Horn, *Jugend in der Vormoderne*.

[10] Brady, *Die deutsche Reformation*.

[11] Herold, 'Empfangsorientierung als Strukturprinzip'. Herold's comprehensive research project, which includes letter manuals and letters throughout the entire Middle Ages until 1575, has been a source of inspiration.

[12] 'Vnd sunderlich was Einem Jung zw der Ehr vnd lob Raicht sich emssiglich fleyysen zw pessern zw folgen vnd dem vnErttigen Zorn vnd Thorette gehorsam meyden. Vnd dich davon ab zw ziehen vnd so das geschiht das haist vom vbell abgestanden vnd den verstandt zw fassen. Damit Ein Junger zw deren Erkantnus kumpt, das das vorhaben der Juge[n]t nicht wert ist welchs die straff von den Elttern oder von den die Im für gesetzt sein nit gutlich an Nehmen will' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 503).

the range of his father's immediate influence. Prior to receiving this letter, Sixtus did not seem to have pursued his apprenticeship in a satisfactory way. Instead, he had neglected his duties. Before the father threatened Sixtus with more serious sanctions in the final part of the letter,[13] he wished to motivate his son by his rhetoric. He contrasted his son's behaviour with an ideal one. These few sentences can therefore be interpreted as an indicator for a more general value system. The son was not allowed to live outside the urban honour system to which the Tucher family and especially Leonhart Tucher was tied, even though he was residing outside of the city. Leonhart Tucher seems to have spoken about the family status as well when he reminded Sixtus that his behaviour was not honourable for a young man. In addition to this, as Leonhart pointed out, Sixtus was competing with sons of other patrician and merchant families and could lose his personal honour.

As a reaction to this scenario, the father dictated general standards for the life of his son. His own authority must have been in danger, since he apparently felt urged to give reasons for his orders. He argued that unadvised activities by the young could have damaging effects on the life of young men and were generally 'nicht wert' (of no value whatsoever). The complex concept behind the word 'Ehr' (honour) therefore conveyed more than just the social structure and political hierarchy of the late medieval Free Imperial City of Nuremberg, where the closed class of merchants took advantage of far-reaching privileges and, unlike the elites of other cities, also dominated the guilds. Rather than just mirroring this static hierarchy, the concept of honour is here explicitly connected with the life cycle, that is, the age of the individual determines what is honourable for that person.[14] Research on honour has recently shown that honour was also a dynamic virtue and could be conferred as well as suddenly withdrawn.[15] Sixtus was supposed to have an individual conscience, according to which he took decisions and acted within the borders of social norms that he was not allowed to leave behind while away from Nuremberg.

Like other merchants' sons, Sixtus had to stay in Lyon for periods as long as one year. Once older they had to make decisions without being able to get in touch with their fathers first; they could only report the results after they had

[13] Although the passage does not suggest any specific sanction and even seems rather vague, the high degree of aggravation can well be felt ('mein Ernst solst spurn').

[14] For the urban dimension of honour, see Dinges, 'Die Ehre als Thema der Stadtgeschichte', p. 409.

[15] Much has been written on the issue of shame and honour in the Middle Ages, especially in the Mediterranean countries, but on this specific issue, see Lentz, *Konflikt, Ehre, Ordnung*; and Rublack, 'Anschläge auf die Ehre', pp. 381–411.

made the necessary decisions. Therefore, on the one hand, they were not immediately under the control of their fathers; on the other hand, the geographical distance produced new social requirements that necessitated new forms to communicate trust. Sixtus's father attempted such vain control over the life of his son when he wrote: 'that the young man comes to reason and learns that his own free actions are of no value if he does not learn from sanctions imposed upon him by his parents or their temporary substitutes'.[16] Young men were in great danger. Any action that was independent of the family's value system was detrimental to the continuity of family status and contradicted the patriarchal structure.[17] In order to illustrate family values and the lack thereof, 'parents' were contrasted with the strong emotions of 'Zorn' (rage) and 'Thorette' (folly). The same dangers are evoked in contemporary manuals on the passions.[18] These teachings conveyed the belief that emotions and passions were too unstable to be relied upon. Around 1550, relying on emotions was even regarded as dangerous for the individual. To avoid one's emotions one needed to rely on reason and to accept, as the letter suggests, the salvation of the Cross. This syncretistic value system was alluded to in Leonhart's letter in order to demonstrate that Sixtus's misbehaviour was, in substance, to succumb to the forces of the irrational and a failure to live according to reason ('verstandt zw fassen'). In these few words appears a neo-stoical difference between a reasonable life and a disruptive, confusing, and distracting emotional one. These teachings were presented in a manner believed to be palpable to the son: 'Ein Junger [...] kann somit prinzipiell zur Erkantnus' ([so that] a youth [can] arrive at understanding). The pressure exerted by the father was intended to foster this 'realization'. These statements would have been meaningless, however, if no process of understanding had been possible whatsoever.

The father could only control and correct the development of his son by requiring more intensive communication. Therefore, this letter, like many others but this one in a more severe language, demanded that the son reply within a few days: 'wolst mir mit Erstem wider antwortt schreiben'. Frequency as a rule in correspondence is also visible in the assurances of sons writing to their father. To ask for an exchange of letters was not a momentary reaction but an attempt to

[16] 'Damit Ein Junger zw deren Erkantnus kumpt, das das vorhaben der Juge[n]t nicht wert ist welchs die straff von den Elttern oder von den die Im für gesetzt sein nit gutlich an Nehmen will' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 503).

[17] On the importance of strategies to foster continuity in dynasties and families of late Antiquity and the late Middle Ages, see Spieß, *Familie und Verwandtschaft*; Vuolanto, 'Selling a Freeborn Child'.

[18] Lipsius, *De constantia*, trans. by Neumann; and Abel, *Stoizismus und frühe Neuzeit*.

establish a system of continuous communication. In this case, however, the letter seems to demand a quicker response than usual.

Although the correspondence may appear intimate, several factors suggest that it was not private. The messengers that Leonhart Tucher used were selected for their reliability: when writing a letter one had to keep in mind the dangers that transporting a letter might entail, the main one being that the messenger reads the letter. Therefore, letters comprised no information that was top secret. Letters do not seem to have been written by a single person or read only by one individual. Brothers commented respectively on their behaviour, wrote letters together and forwarded news from the father, or supplied their family at home with information from teachers or the markets, as well as delivering each other's letters. Letters were reread by the recipient[19] and also shown to others. Information was also exchanged frequently, as shown in one of Leonhart's letters to his son, asking for information about a colleague's son, Paulus, a student at Wittenberg; Leonhart says explicitly that he intends to inform the family of this young man, which information he would most likely have transmitted viva voce. The private character of letters is further diluted by the use of professional writers employed in the house. For all of these reasons, the values that Leonhart's letter to Sixtus reaffirmed were less related to a specific situation; rather, they structured communication between young and old in the family.

Judged against a broader corpus, Leonhart's letter shares much of its content with other letters in similar situations. For instance, educational directives were tailored to combat the defects adults expected to see in the behaviour of the young ones. The content of the letters seems to have varied only in the choice of concrete examples with which they gave evidence to rules they all shared. Whether such examples were fictitious or drew upon an actual body of experience is not crucial to the image of youth constructed and repeated by them. The importance of good company is, for instance, dealt with in Gabriel Tucher's letter to his father of 16 January 1546. He was alarmed about the conduct of his brother Daniel.[20] Gabriel argues that a 'young person in Daniel's entourage had a bad influence on him' so that he was now a 'cause of worry'.[21] Gabriel per-

[19] For evidence of sons rereading or having to reread letters, see Beer, 'Das Verhältnis zwischen Eltern und ihren jugendlichen Kindern', p. 139.

[20] Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 140.

[21] 'So habe ich In Eurm schreiben meins pruders danihel halbenn nach Lengs vernomen wie Er zu mailandt also sorgfeltig Ist worden, kon wol gedencken das Ims also ein Jonger darzu verursacht' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 140).

ceives that, given 'the absence of an understanding person who can explain to him and help him understand [his situation], Daniel should not stay in Lyon but be moved to another master'.[22] This statement displays the stereotype of the young man in need of guidance; as other letters will show more generally, special care and admonition were therefore regarded as necessary.

Another more general rule of education, enunciated in light of a specific situation, can be found in Leonhart's letter to Levin Tucher (1537–94) on 22 August 1559. Levin had taken an accounting book ('ein püch[en]') with him from his father's house despite being 'explicitly forbidden to do so'; the father demanded most of all obedience and that this book 'be sent back immediately'.[23] Leonhart then addressed the problem of authority more generally: 'I warn you that you shall never secretly deny my will if I prohibit for good reason that you do something. Rather you shall reflect upon what I have told you and how you should behave before God, and pray [...] and that you are responsible against God to learn what is necessary to be a good merchant.'[24] The father's claim to obedience is legitimized and reaffirmed by religious admonitions. To follow the authority of the father is the only way a young man can determine what is lawful.[25] Instead of

[22] 'fürcht auch es sey der grost mangel das er niemantz pey Im hatt der Im aus Reden vnd Recht zu versten kindt geben/ die weil Es oder also In sich pilt hatt vnd Ir sorg habt [wo] Ir In nit wecknempt es mecht ein grosers doraus vileicht mit Im Entston' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 140).

[23] 'Mein grus züvor lieber Levinus Ich pin In erfarung kumen das du dich vntterstanden hast noch ein püxen so des Jorg Rottengatters ist hast mit dir von hin gefürt das Ich mich dieweil Ich dies verpotten hab nit gsochen hat vnd solst wissen das Ich dirs nit will also hin lassen gen vnd gedenck vnd schick mir die vnd mit dem ersten potten heräus In mein handt' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 341).

[24] 'den solt es dahin gelangen wen Ich etwas aus gütten vrsachen verpuet vnd du wolst dich haymisch duckisch vnd meinen willen vnttersten. Des soll ich nach deine willen für zu nehmen das wie Ich dir nit gedüäd darvmb Ich dich nemlich will gewarnt haben. Solst villmer gedencken wie Ich di[r] bevolhen hab, dich gegen gott zw beflogst' (?) In teglich fro züm auf sten vnd zu nacht Zum nyder gen mit deme hochlich gepott als in armer sund zw bekennen vnd fleelich auch hertzlich zw peett vmb gnad vnd ein solligs Ennde vnd dich Im In sein Geschehe barmhertzigkait schutz vnd schirm zu beuolhen die gnad vnd gaist verstandt geben Recht zw thün vnd unRecht zw mayden, vnd des du gegen seiner Ewigen goth art auch meniglich verantwortlich sey, des du auch In mass' wie andere mit schreiben Rechnen vnd züm Handel dinstlich mag sein dich wolst befleyss' vnd nit all mall wartt' pis ma' dich ein ding wide mir heiss das zwar beuolhen ist zu thün vnd des selbig willig vnd mit fleys zw bericht' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 140).

[25] 'verstandt [...] Recht zw thün vnd vnRecht zw mayden' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 140).

acting against the will of the father, the son should admit his sins and seek mercy as his father has taught him; to this latter end, he should 'pray daily after rising and in the night to ask for God's mercy'.[26] In this letter, 'God' is not only a powerful actor but is also used as a rhetorical figure to solicit a change in the attitude of the son;[27] stereotypical invocations of God in merchant letters and pre-Reformation accounting books are plentiful, but are seldom presented as part of arguments in debates. If the son refused to change his behaviour he would then also turn against religion. No better way, it seems, could have been found to motivate his obedience. God was not merely invoked as the religious authority but also used rhetorically in a given social context.[28] This is not to say that He was simply a rhetorical argument, but by relating to Him the father was actually *doing* something.

From this demand for obedience a detailed catalogue of virtues was derived, partly structured against a list of former wrongdoings. Leonhart apparently had knowledge that his son Levin was lazy and neglected his main task while abroad. Predictably, the father expected that his son would learn to write for business purposes, study accounting, and display 'self-motivated industriousness', like other apprentices.[29] Leonhart Tucher reminded Levin that he should not misuse the isolated but secure conditions under which he lived abroad, where news about his conduct reached Nuremberg only after a long period of time. He also reminded him that there existed a network to help him lest he misbehaved. The son was urged to report his progress by letter and therefore to maintain a stable

[26] 'Solst villmer gedencken wie Ich di(r) bevolhen hab, dich gegen gott zw beflogst' (?) In teglich fro züm auf sten vnd zu nacht Zum nyder gen mit deme hochlichen gepott als in armer sund zw bekennen vnd fleelich auch hertzlich zw peett vmb gnad vnd ein solligs Ennde vnd dich Im In sein Geschehe barmhertzigkait schutz vnd schirm zu beuolhen' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 140).

[27] Loetz, 'How to Do Things with God', reached similar conclusions in cases of insults against God, when 'God' was used both as a weapon and as an argument. Loetz therefore argued that a merely theological or pious reading would not recognize the whole potential of these incidents and that a rhetorical reading might also be necessary.

[28] This is even more explicit in the *Knabenspiegel*, where the narrator, i.e. the figure of the father, claims on his death bed that his son was meant to lead a God-oriented life and obey his father. He tells this shortly before his death, to reassure his son who had recently changed his way of life. He also insists that obedience to the father is the main rule according to which his grandchildren should be raised. This shows, therefore, the ethical side when attempting to enhance family tradition. See Wickram, *Knabenspiegel*, ed. by Müller.

[29] 'wie andere mit schreiben Rechnen vnd züm Handel dinstlich mag sein dich wolst befleyssen vnd nit all mall wartten pis man dich ein ding wide mir heissen das zwar [zuvor?] beuolhen ist zu thün' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 140).

bond. While acknowledging one's progress was the prime goal, the actual duty of writing letters was also important in its own right.[30] This implicit demand for mutual communication helps explain the structurally and stylistically uniform appearance of most letters. Writing a letter created a meta-level of communication that helped assure the recipient that there was no cause to worry. On this level of communication, the mere existence of a letter could become relevant, because it signified social coherence.

Besides the injunction to write frequently, compliance with concrete rules like dressing appropriately reflects Leonhart's concern about his son's public appearance. He asked Levin to 'dich nit schemen dem hutt wan es die notturft erfodert (und?) seine claid vnd Schuch zw seubern' (clean [his] hat, clothing, and shoes when necessary and to be ashamed if he failed to do so). These recommendations are not specific to this letter; rather they are somewhat common. The urban environment appears as a conscious civilizing force requiring the adoption of a specific set of manners, perceived as more refined than the ones found in the countryside.[31] This 'civilizing' process can be observed in the letters by the fathers as well as in the letters of the sons. In order to refine our analysis of the dynamics between the two generations, one must shift from the epistolary discourse of the father(s) to the epistolary discourse of the son(s).

Paulus's letter of 20 March 1547 about his cousin Martin and his brother Herdegen adds more details to our understanding of the intergenerational relations in mid-sixteenth-century Nuremberg. The twenty-three-year-old Paulus seemed to have assumed some authority over his thirteen-year-old brother, although he still remained under the auspices of their father and promised to live a life with which the father and society could agree.[32] He claimed in his letter that his and Herdegen's 'wandell' (performance and behaviour) were adorned by the virtues that Leonhart expected from them.[33] Among these was austerity, although Paulus remained ambiguous whether this virtue primarily concerned his private life or whether it was a rule he followed in business, or both. It was, however, an ethical standard his father must have dictated to him. Paulus therefore hoped that 'Ir ein Gott will nit anderst vernemen soltt' (you shall not hear

[30] 'vnd des selbig willig vnd mit fleys zw berichten' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 140).

[31] Schwerhoff, 'Zivilisationsprozeß und Geschichtswissenschaft', p. 561.

[32] 'Eins Züchtich[en] wandels vnd wesse Ein rechtschaffe vnd Züchtich wandell' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 504).

[33] 'die fleissigest Ausführung von all ewer thun vnd handlun(g)' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 504).

anything else neither from me nor from anyone else if God will). Although the young men's decisions were presented as their own and judgement by their father seemed deferred to later, the responsibility for misbehaviour appears carefully shifted from that of the sons alone to that of the sons and God. Paulus wrote that the true source of evil was a lack of God's mercy, and the presence or absence of the latter was related to the way of life that had been chosen. Only through His help was a responsible life possible, because evil materialized in the world and influenced the young.[34] In light of what is to follow later in the letter, an apologetic tendency cannot be overlooked: Paulus is responsible for his own deeds but can also relate to something outside of his own responsibility, God's mercy.

The image of youth given both by the father(s) and by the son(s), revealed the sons as satellites of the God-like father.[35] The order in the family was established by divine mercy and required obedience.[36] The frequent invocations of God certainly had a literal religious meaning. The stereotypical repetition, however, makes them appear to be a representation of the writing self, an image that the young men felt was appropriate:

> we hope to do all this with the help of God with all our industriousness and we will spend money reasonably and all your orders shall be put into action to the fullest. With God's help we shall write as often as possible with all industriousness, as we trust in God and pray that His mercy convey us [the strength to] lead a just life.[37]

In contrast to the previous discussion of God, when He was invoked by the father, this time what is meant is the religious course of daily life and devotion.

The above quotation seems to be the first, positive half of a rhetorical discourse constituted with a thesis and an antithesis. In the latter, Paulus described how his cousin Martin behaved and that he was a frequent and harmful companion to Herdegen. He made promises, expressed hope, and only then gave hints about the dangers Herdegen encountered in Martin's company. The cousin Martin is introduced at the beginning of the letter as 'ist nit gern daselbst wer lieber hie will

[34] The devil's influence is even more central to the *Knabenspiegel*, where it is frequently given as a reason for the vulnerability of the young life (for example, Wickram, *Knabenspiegel*, ed. by Müller, pp. 735, 737).

[35] Andresen, 'Vaterbild und Männlichkeit'.

[36] Bieritz and Kähler, 'Haus', pp. 481–82.

[37] 'mit allem thun welchen wir hoffen mit gotts hilff mit allen fleis nach zu kumen vnd mit dem Haußhaltt auff das eingezognest halltt als sein kann vnd all ewer thun vnd handlun(g) soll auff das fleissigest außgewardt wern vnd mit dem naus schreib wol wir vns mit gotts hilff auch fleysig das so offt es sein kann soll eüch mit allem fleis nauß geschriben werden welchs wir zy gott hoffe vnd Im auch teglich darümb bitten woln' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 504).

Im die zeitt zu lang wern' (he does not like staying there, would rather be here, he is bored), a complaint that Paulus suggested should be acknowledged. This comment by Paulus was certainly not due to his consideration about his cousin's personal discomfort, but as an issue of broader importance in order to understand Martin's influence over Herdegen. In more general terms, Paulus assumed that the problem of companionship was of key importance.

Paulus went on to describe conspicuous traces of illness in the body of Martin and parallelled these unpleasant visual traits of the body with ethical aspects of his behaviour: 'Will mir sunst an seim thun auch nit gefall' (I also do not like his behaviour and performance).[38] Here the handwriting in the document is not fully readable, but the text generally clearly relates to the fact that Martin consciously misbehaved like 'someone who is not able to understand. It would be better to send him away because here he would not learn anything'.[39] To remove Martin would be the solution; the sentence 'Martin does not feel well where he is' is used as a partial explanation to this plan: 'Moving Martin would help to avoid contact between him and Herdegen and avoid Martin's bad influence', Paulus wrote.[40] It is interesting that for the young ones, 'feeling well where one is' and 'being bored and unhappy' are considered important arguments, whereas their father did not seem to have considered these factors. Another possible means to improve Herdegen's behaviour from his older brother's point of view was regular epistolary contacts between the two brothers and between Herdegen and their father, Leonhart Tucher, in Nuremberg. Such contact would promote adherence to the familial values: 'I have ordered my brother Herdegen to write you frequently, I am also writing to him often to give him reason to write.'[41]

[38] Paulus established the parallel between behaviour, overall impression, and health more precisely in another letter about Herdegen from 14 July 1547 (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 504). Paulus reported that Herdegen looked ill due to his uncontrolled desire to consume 'obs' (fruit) from the garden of his master. Paulus felt it was necessary to organize his brother's diet which has so far been motivated by appetite alone. Herdegen was now 'schwag' (fainting). The necessity of organizing even the diet was apparently part of the father's positive vision of youth, although in this particular case, it might be seen that Paulus had an obsessive desire for control. Later on Paulus even admits that Herdegen is industrious but does not listen to him; nevertheless the dependence on Leonhart, to whom these events are reported, cannot be ignored.

[39] 'vbel [...] als einer der es etwa nit verstehtt. Es wer gutt das er von danen hinweck kem dan ich hab sorg E(r) wer nit sunder mer da lernen' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 504).

[40] 'Hab auch sorg wen er offt vmb den herdeg wür sein Er wür In in vilen Verkern wiewoll ich Im bevolhen hab Er soll nit vill vmb In sein' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 504).

[41] 'So hab ich meinen Bruder Herdeg sunst auch fleisig bevolh das er offt her vnd auch Euch naus soll schreib will Im auch hie dester offter schreib auff das ich Im ursag gib dester

On 27 March 1547, Paulus reported that he would keep an eye on Herdegen and that he had purchased a lute for him.[42] In the context of the letter, the seemingly unmotivated purchase was regarded as self-evident, and Paulus must have expected that his father would applaud this purchase. This evidence suggests that the perception of Paulus was strongly influenced by what his father expected him to write. The categories he applied when he commented on his brothers are overall similar to those of his father. Leonhart and Paulus's judgement is, therefore, more than comparable and sometimes even identical.[43]

In Paulus's letter of 5 July 1547, the focus is shifted to the responsibility of Herdegen himself.[44] It had been an improvement to place him under a new master. Paulus's other remarks are equally positive. On the one hand, they seem intended to soothe the tension and eliminate doubts concerning his own role. Paulus sought at length to strengthen his own position as a responsible teacher of his brother, despite being himself still under the control of his father: 'I hope he will behave and perform well [...] in response to your letter I will let you know that he has done so until now and that nothing special must be complained.'[45]

On the other hand, Paulus attempted to protect himself against his father's objections. An earlier letter, dated 23 April 1545, echoed such critical remarks when Paulus began with the words 'ermont Ir mich' (your admonitions to me), and then reaffirmed his responsibility for his brothers.[46] The same phenomenon took place in a letter dated 5 July 1547. Paulus attempted to confirm his own position before acknowledging that, despite his own best efforts, Herdegen was not developing as he should have. This could be read as Paulus's attempt to avoid being accused for Herdegen's misbehaviour.

The strategy of self-protection illustrates why a distinction is necessary between what is said, what is meant, and the hidden, unmentioned goal of writing this letter:[47] Herdegen is 'lazy, does not fulfil his duties although he is con-

offtter zw schreib' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 504).

[42] Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 13.

[43] These letters were pragmatic texts that do not necessarily fit a preconceived concept of letters and top-down methodological assumptions that assumed the authenticity of letters. For recent discussions on ego-documents, see von Greyerz, Medick, and Veit, *Von der dargestellten Person zum erinnerten Ich*; and Jancke and Ulbrich, *Vom Individuum zur Person*.

[44] Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, nos 509–10.

[45] 'Vnd verhofft e(r) soll sich wol halltten. [...] Wist das er sich jetzt her wohl gehalt hatt vnd nichts sunderlichs vber In (z)w klagen' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, nos 509–10).

[46] Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 493.

[47] For a linguistically informed, pragmatic, and methodological approach to language as

stantly told to do so and even refuses my orders loudly. We must not take this personally and ignore this. Apart from that he is industrious'.[48] The ambivalence in Paulus's judgement of Herdegen is evident. Herdegen is not only described as 'industrious', but also (and mainly) as lazy, ignorant, and boisterous. It is conceivable that Paulus was trying to protect Herdegen; a more important motivation was probably to exclude himself from the father's anticipated censure of Herdegen's tremendous defects. These assumptions about Paulus's motivations offer specific examples of the relations between the generations in the late Middle Ages.

The following report of Herdegen's deficiencies dealt with misbehaviour that was visible in public. His conversational style was unpleasant and 'damaged his reputation'; this could have tremendous effects, especially in 'distinguished society'.[49] Herdegen's indecent curiosity lets him 'forcefully demand information in conversation', an ambivalent quality in an apprentice, and 'talk about things he does not understand'.[50] Herdegen's loquaciousness must have denied anyone else the opportunity to speak, and this mistake may have damaged not only Paulus's own reputation but also that of the famous Tucher family together with its head, Leonhart Tucher.[51] But Paulus went even further and suggested that his brother was not only misbehaving but that he could not be civilized according to expected norms. Herdegen reacted aggressively when admonished and did not improve as instructed. Paulus wrote: 'I wanted to prohibit him from speaking [...] it would not harm if you instructed him that he would be best to follow the instructions.'[52]

action, see Loetz, 'How to Do Things with God'.

[48] 'allein den mangell hatt er an Im das er ein wenig faul vnd hinlessig mit sein thun ist vnd stets will gemantt sein vnd v'drewst In doch wen man Im etwas ha[i]st oder ermannt vnd ist als palt mit wortte wider ein er wist vor wohl was er thun soll (m)an dorff Im solchs nit haissen. Aber es muß einer solchs vber horn vnd sichs nit an nehmen. Ist sunst mit seinen thun fleisig' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 493).

[49] 'vbell; bey fürnemen leutte [...] zur VnEhr [...] Reich(en)' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 493).

[50] 'mit Reden will wissen; Reden davon er gar kein grundt nit wayst vnd seine seltzame einfallen gedancke herüf bringt' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 493).

[51] 'mit Reden [...] zy vbermessig [...] welchs Im dan sehr vbell anstehtt vnd zw Zeitte ein Schandt ist vor andern welchs gutt wer das er sich solchs zu zeitte ein wenig Entstündtt. Dan wen er etwa ein mal bey fürnemen leutte soltt sein vnd wolt sich sein altte geprauch nach haltte welchs Im nur zur VnEhr wur Reich' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 493).

[52] 'Ich hab Ims woll etlich mal vnttersagt aber er lest Im mit solche nichts vntersag vnd meint ich woll Im das reden gar v'piett welichs mein mainung nit ist. [...] künt nit schaden das Ir Im von desselb wegen auch ein wenig vntterRicht geben hett wie er sich mit reden wn er bey leutt wer gebürlich sollt haltten des er etwa passer mocht nach kumen dan wen ich Im etwa mein

Despite all attempts to protect himself, Paulus here seems to recognize defeat by Herdegen's defects because he frankly tells them. Attempts to educate Herdegen had failed, and it had become increasingly unlikely that they would ever work. For his own sake, Paulus cannot risk that negative news about Herdegen reach Nuremberg via another source than his own letters. If that happened, the criticism of his father would be immediate and be extended to himself. Therefore Paulus evokes the mechanisms of a successful education: 'I am confident that he will continue to be willing [to listen to recommendations] when he comes to us, because he has earlier done as he was told, was grateful [for corrections] and was obedient.'[53]

This example of a positive education supports Paulus's role and fits with the criticisms made of Herdegen. These more specific norms are in accordance with the apprenticeship's core knowledge.[54] The necessity to correct a young person as well as his ability to be educated were part of the youth image. In addition to learning foreign languages, calculating, and judging goods (all issues which we find examples of in these letters), young boys were educated in conversation and hygiene, as the above examples have shown. Corrections regarding such matters are helpful in determining what the parents and teachers expected young people to be like and how they attempted to correct them. The focus must therefore again be switched back to the father's discourse.

About thirteen years later, when Leonhart was seventy-three years old, Herdegen was no longer 'young' in the sense that he was no longer completely dependent on his father and no longer in a strictly defined learning status. Yet his father reiterated in a letter his maxims and catalogued detailed orders that a young person had to obey.[55] Herdegen, now thirty-seven years old, was confronted with admonitions not usually made to individuals at his age, which would indicate that the definition of youth was not only bound to specific stages in the life cycle. We should also consider that the life stages were defined in the Middle Ages by the position of a given individual in relation to others rather than by specific age limits.

gutt bedunck oder ein anderer vnttersaghet solches' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 493).

[53] 'Ich hoff derselbig wen er Rein würdt kumen er wer sich wohl halten dan er sunst ist willig was man Im ha(i)st oder waist das nimpt er zw danck auff vnd kumpt denselbigen als palt fleisig nach' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 493).

[54] Bruchhäuser, *Quellen und Dokumente*, p. 4.

[55] Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 404.

Leonhart's letter is less a source of information on the youth culture of the time than on the disciplinary discourse of a seventy-three-year-old father. He increases the impact of his letter by mentioning that he had overcome tremendous pain in his stiff hands to warn his son of the dangers of the new era: '[I write to] remind you now drastically and emphatically of things you should not forget while people have become naughty.'[56]

He illustrated these dangers by the story of two young men who had been recently left fatherless and whom Herdegen apparently knew. They had been living for some time without reasonable advice and had greatly suffered from the bad habits of their social environment:

> Please [Herdegen] take into account the sons of Florentzius and Sebalt Orttel, whose fathers died and who are now on their own [...] due to their damaged reputation they are no longer accepted as trading partners. That is the necessary result if one acts according to lust: one will drown [in one's vices] and become foolish [...] they have drunk too much and celebrated other excesses and are now marginalized. Their way of life is not only not praiseworthy [...] but there is nothing to be gained by being with them.[57]

Leonhart warned Herdegen not to become socially 'beflecktt' (marginalized) like the two dishonest and unreliable young men. They spent their lives 'mitt wollust' (in voluptuousness and lust) and had become known for their vices as well as for their uncivilized lifestyle and excessive drinking. Leonhart contrasted their behaviour with a life lived 'vernunftigen verstandt' (according to reason) and 'nutz' (profitable cleverness), that is, the long- and short-term goals of education. Even an individual in his thirties could lose these qualities, as is apparent from the father's letter; Leonhart treats Herdegen like a young man again and highlights the dangers that could arise, especially if he was to spend time with people like these sons of the Orttel brothers. As a consequence, one might lose sight of one's long-term goals and attain nothing of lasting worth.

[56] 'possen vnd verfurischen gepreuch; ich hab di(r) lang nitt geschriben mir wollen die hendtt ser vnglenck worn wie woll Es von notten das ich vill vnd offt mal allerley ErInerung pey der ytzigen vngezogne welltt hinein schreiben so will doch palltt vergessen wern' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 404).

[57] 'do nym das Exempell für die handtt wie es ytz mit paider orttell als das florentzius auch Sebalt orttels seligen nach gelasne sunen gestalltt ist [...] sie nitt mehr zu andern Erlichen sachen durffen kumen oder sehen lassen das volgt wan man der welt mitt wolust der mossen nach henckt das man darin Erdringtt vnd zu thorndt wirtt [...] vbermessigen drincken [...] beflecktt sein nit allein keins Lob werdt [...] kein nutz mit in oder pey in gesucht [oder] erlangt wern' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 404).

In this, the letter truly exceeds in tone earlier letters by claiming that the familial continuity across generations was in danger if Herdegen misbehaved. The father apparently had knowledge of personal contact between the two brothers and Herdegen: '[Such excesses] damage one's reputation [...] and are harmful to soul, body and health to such a degree that one cannot at all be helped in the end [...] it is even more harmful than when you prided yourself for being able to drink wine in excessive quantities.' Leonhart offers here a rather detailed reference to the conditions that let familial continuity fail. In the words of the father, the two fatherless young men 'drowned' in their vices and their situation became hopeless. Herdegen was in danger of suffering in 'soul, body, and health'.[58] Here the body, public appearance in society, and salvation were seen as linked. Although we find some of the same bad habits and vices evoked earlier, their consequences in this letter were different.

But Leonhart went on to postulate an overarching historical change that may also have triggered the behaviour of Herdegen. Leonhart distanced his 'mein Zeitten' (own socialization, meaning the socialization in a specific era) from that of Herdegen's, who several times during the year was apparently so drunk that he was seriously ill and needed medical therapy: 'I know that you take medication several times per year. Neither I — nor other people when I was young — have done that so that I must assume that you drink wine undiluted which is something that was not tolerated and not allowed [when I was young].'[59]

The drastic words make clear that Herdegen's situation could not be justified. The father implies that Herdegen is still a young man in his eyes because he relates to his own formative period. Leonhart interprets Herdegen's recent silence as a sign that he is not willing and not in the position to defend himself when confronted with such claims, a rather frequent claim in letters demanding answers. The father, one of the most important citizens of Nuremberg in his generation, both politically as well as economically, contrasts his own success with that of Herdegen's behaviour. Never, he writes, had Herdegen seen his father act like he is acting. By neglecting the good example, by showing 'vbell leichtferttigkaitt' (carelessness) the son will experience all-encompassing dangers: 'You have never learnt

[58] 'mit in zu schanden, [...] sell leib gesunhait [...] zu lettz nymer mag davon geholffen werden, [...] due Erhlichen Jungen so in geselschaft pey ander gewest dich ser beruembt haben, wie du vbermessig vill weins vormogest drincken' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 404).

[59] 'farung befindt das irs Jars etliche mall pflegtt Ertzney Einnemen das ist zu mein Zeitten von mir noch andern nit geprauch worn, do hab ich mich vermindt es ku(m) aus dem das ir die wein (trink) vngemuschtt man mi(r) zu mein Zeitt nitt gedultt noch gestatt hatt zu druncken' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 404).

such behaviour from me [...] of which all damage and loss on soul, body, and honour follow sharply.'[60] Like Paulus earlier, Leonhart now claims that the son could not have learned the negative behaviour from the father. The stereotypical parallel of 'body, soul, and honour' is frequent and seems to communicate the comprehensive criticism.

The last part of the father's letter deals with bad habits in business. The father reproves Herdegen for not using a second register so that he could keep good track of the goods to avoid serious mistakes. He mentions several such instances, such as when the packages reached Nuremberg with the wrong content or with the same numbers written on two different packages. Leonhart protests and warns Herdegen not to take the long-term risks connected with such practices: 'If one deals with this well-renowned trade in such a way, how will one be expected to act in other matters in the future, therefore you [Herdegen] should write an honest report and conceal nothing.'[61] Leonhart demonstrates the importance of honesty by referring to the development of Venice, a history of decline. Venetian merchants had apparently lost their good reputation by disappointing their customers' trust.

Another factor that can damage the reputation of a merchant was lending money to friends as Herdegen had done when asked. Leonhart reminded his son to appreciate even small amounts of money and, by principle, never to lend money to persons whom he knew personally and who were friends. This would produce risks that could not even be fathomed, and Leonhart reminded Herdegen that basic trading values should never be dominated by social relationships. In the case of friends asking to borrow money, this would be especially detrimental since many others would follow their example and their request could hardly be denied, because it had been granted to other friends. Not lending money seems to link interests related to business with the ones related to urban life: it is therefore recommended 'to behave agreeably in the tavern, not to drink wine undiluted, to rise and go to bed at an appropriate time, deal modestly with other people and not talk irresponsibly, as well as reflect upon other vices and God's punishment for them'.[62]

[60] 'Ir habtt Je von mir nitt gesehen noch lerntt [...] alles vbell leichtferttigkaitt ver derben an der sell leib vnd Er gewaltig darauf ervolgtt' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 404).

[61] 'wan man dan mitt solichen Leuttern handell also vnfleissig vmbgehett wie gett der dan in andern sachen zu das wir hie nit gewar wern darumb wolst nur ein lauttern berichtt davon heraus schreiben [...] vnd mit nicht [...] verhalten' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 404).

[62] 'im Keller recht zu sein kein wein vngemüscht nitt drincken zu rechtter Zeit nyder gen vnd auf stee, mitt den leuten beschaid' sey mitt reden vnd sie nitt hitzig anfar vnd sich vor allen leichtferttigen reden vnde ander gottes forchtt vnd straff bedrachtt; [...] du werst auch ein gutter gesell vnd schlucker gewest' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 404).

These maxims concerning conversation and alcohol consumption could certainly be summarized by the central distinction made by contemporary sixteenth-century neo-stoical ethics. All actions should be directed by reason: wine should be diluted before being enjoyed; when choosing a time to go to bed Herdegen should consider when he would have to rise in the morning; social intercourse should not be damaged by unnecessary emotional outbursts or a 'hitzig' (heated mind). One's reputation could be damaged even to the point of 'Schi(m)pff' and 'Spott' (marginalization and ridicule). Leonhart adopts the admonitory language that is usually directed to an apprentice.

Herdegen at thirty-seven years of age was already old enough to be expected to share all the merchant-class values and to be able to learn from the consequences of mistakes or from admonitions; in other words, he should 'know what is appropriate and what harmful in this case'.[63] Despite his age, however, he did not learn from the positive examples surrounding him.

The parallels between the normative authority of the father in the letters of 1547 and 1560 and the regulative perspective of Paulus Tucher are considerable, in both style and argument. The topoi that shaped these apparently frequent letters suggest that there was not only a meta-level of communication relevant to epistolary exchange, but that there must also have been a code unknown to the modern reader. The meaning of the letters seems to rely on reciprocal expectations and knowledge, so that specific situations could be discussed through an exchange of strongly stereotypical texts. Senders and recipients must have known the reasons and the consequences of a fatherly threat to let 'his seriousness be felt'. Letters, as the only remaining texts, are the surface of a more complex historical communication system. Elements of the image of youth that formed the substance of the correspondence were used as flexible arguments. One way to define and approach the problems involved in interpreting them is by a comparison of their discourse with the youth image in contemporary moral literature.

Wickram's play written in 1554, the *Mirror of Young Boys* (*Knabenspiegel*), resembles very closely the situation depicted in the Tuchers' correspondence. The problems related to social mobility and familial continuity, as they arise due to the temporary absence of the sons from home, are treated in a similar manner in both letters and play. Wickram was an author who was well aware of the intensive book market in the mid-sixteenth century, since his post in the city of Colmar

[63] 'pist nun pey Einem Zimlichen alltter solst pillich wissen was dir in dem fall woll oder vbell anstett das pos meiden vnd sich des gutten mitt gottes segen Ernstlich an nehmen zu pessern vnd andern Jungen ein gutt Exempell vor dragen' (Nürnberg, Stadtarchiv, E 29/IV, no. 404).

involved selling books in the German fair markets. He was also quite sensitive to the problem of social mobility because he was born noble but raised in a bourgeois context. The plot of his work parallels that narrated in and constituted by the Tucher letters. The frequent circulation of books (especially of one as popular as Wickram's) in the market for print media can be given as a reason for the similarities that one finds.

The plot involves boys of different social standing who are archetypes in that they obey or disobey their father. Social historians of reading and literacy have argued that Wickram's work was actually widely read and well received at the time of its printing.[64] This is not to say that there could ever be a direct relationship between this text and social reality, since the medium necessarily mediates what is said and what is understood. Even the statements of the dedication that seem factual are part of a literary genre.[65] Therefore, we cannot know whether Wickram really intended to write a practical handbook for everyday use for the children of the mayor of a middle-sized German town ('Schultheiss'). Here the same caution must be applied that was applied to the personal elements in the private letters: the subject of the dedication remains, after all, the subject of a text, and was therefore fictionalized.[66]

The core values of education are presented in an abstract form in the introductory poem: 'this book is about teaching the young the great benefit of studying, obedience to the parents, to the school, and to teachers, but also, by contrast, to warn them how dangerous disobedient behaviour is'.[67] This praise of industrious learning and the caveat of disobedience could stem directly from one of the letters written by Leonhart Tucher. The advantages of being obedient and the dangers of acting otherwise are demonstrated, with the intention of teaching 'Junger' (youths). Two virtues are highlighted, 'forcht' (fear) and 'scham' (shame).[68]

[64] Nivre, 'Facts or Fiction'.

[65] Wickram dedicates his play *Knabenspiegel* to a man of the social elite, father to at least two sons.

[66] A similar critique (of 'denying factuality') but this time in the context of medieval rituals and their interpretation can be found in Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual*. The debate it provoked has made clear that the basis for any historical knowledge is texts. Therefore it is essential to reflect on the medium of memoria.

[67] 'Was grossen Nutz das Studieren | Gehorsamkeit gegen Vatter vnd Mutter | Schul vnd Lermeistern bringet | Hergegen auch was grosser Geferligkeit | aus dem Widerspyl erwachsen | Der Jugent darin zu lernen | vnd zu einer Warnung fürzuspiegeln': Wickram, *Knabenspiegel*, ed. by Müller, p. 681.

[68] Wickram, *Knabenspiegel*, ed. by Müller, p. 683.

According to the narrator, they constitute the basis for all other virtues of the young and the old alike. More specific to the young is the danger of bad influence from other young people, a phenomenon that the book sets out to prevent: 'I have written this simple book [...] to warn your dear children not to get into bad company, but to follow virtues more than vices.'[69] The book shows this with the story of an orphan. The boy was adopted and raised by a knight. While the adopted son, Fridbert, demonstrated behaviour appropriate to the social group to which he now belonged, the knight's own son, Wilibald, suffered from the consequences of misdemeanour. The *Knabenspiegel* can therefore be regarded as a document produced by a society extremely sensitive to achievements, sometimes even irrespective of social origins.[70] The image of youth also plays an important role.

Both sons are advised to behave like 'respectful youths'.[71] Very soon, however, Wilibald becomes 'halbstarck' (stubborn).[72] This process is accelerated when Wilibald makes the acquaintance of Lottarius, whose name resembles the word 'Lotterleben', an unmotivated life without rules, as the text explains plainly.[73] He is the son of a butcher, a generally marginalized profession. Lottarius maliciously and successfully influences Wilibald who, 'liked his [Lottarius's] words of promise exceptionally well since he thought of himself as a nobleman already, like all young men who are rich'.[74] Wilibald was tricked by flattery and wilfully agreed to meet regularly with Lottarius. Fridbert realized the dangers of Lottarius's company when he claimed, 'alas I must see my dear friend be drowned by this harmful company'.[75] He argued with their father that Wilibald himself was responsible for

[69] 'bößer gesellschaft; Hab ich euch diß mein schlechtes buchlein [...] zu schreiben wollen | damit die jugend | als euwer liebe kind sich selb vor arger vnd bößer gesellschaft huten mög | den tugenden mehr dann den lastern nachgedenken': Wickram, *Knabenspiegel*, ed. by Müller, p. 684.

[70] For such a social rise and fall according to virtue, see Wickram, *Knabenspiegel*, ed. by Müller, p. 746. A proverb captures this idea: 'Jung Ritter alt bettler | jung koch als breter' (As a young man a knight, as an old man a clochard, a young cook, an old *breter* (impoverished cook)): Wickram, *Knabenspiegel*, ed. by Müller, p. 766.

[71] 'sich nach seiner jugent so zierlich vnd weißlich haltet': Wickram, *Knabenspiegel*, ed. by Müller, p. 695.

[72] Wickram, *Knabenspiegel*, ed. by Müller, p. 697.

[73] 'O du schnoder vnnd argelistiger Lottarius/ dein namen an dir ist warlich nit vergeben': Wickram, *Knabenspiegel*, ed. by Müller, p. 737.

[74] 'Das zusagen aber vnd versprechen des Lottars gefile jm [Wilibald] auß der massen wol | dann er meinet sich schon ein juncker sein | wie dann gewonlich alle Jungen geneigt seind | wo si etwas guts vnd rychtumb hinder in wissen': Wickram, *Knabenspiegel*, ed. by Müller, p. 702.

[75] 'Wolan muß ich dann meinen lieben gesellen also durch bose gesellschaft sehen vndergon': Wickram, *Knabenspiegel*, ed. by Müller, p. 703.

making friends with Lottarius mainly by losing touch with the norms according to which he was raised. He described Lottarius as an entirely unsuitable companion for a pious young man,[76] given that his 'greatest virtues were being lazy and gluttonous, as well as stealing and manipulating the attitude of young boys from positive virtues to vices'.[77]

The general tendency of young boys towards disobedient behaviour, but also their vulnerability to negative influence from others, is conveyed by the vocabulary used here: 'bubenstück' and 'buberey', denoting petty crimes or semi-illegal acts.[78] The father recognized the veracity of Fridbert's discourse; in consequence, he urged the teacher to apply the hardest means to correct his son's misbehaviour: 'discipline my son and beat him if necessary so that he refuses voluptuous and harmful company and returns to his original state of obedience'.[79] Despite the fact that the letters do not seem to refer to physical punishment, the situation with which both letters and play start are comparable, regardless of the ages of the characters in the play or that of the readers. All were school children and therefore presumably younger than the Tucher sons.

The narrator of the epilogue recommended this story as a 'must-read' for the 'young', a term that cannot be defined precisely in the light of the source. The gender of the intended public seems more specific. One can conclude that only young men were addressed, since there are no female characters in this story. The epilogue goes on to argue that students should not simply learn but be shocked by the consequences of bad behaviour: 'this book is necessary in German schools to let the young [...] be shocked while playing it and become more obedient to their masters'.[80]

The narrator stated that in his present time similar situations could be observed among the 'Jugendt' (young). This claim cannot be taken as a true fact but as a hint about the structural dangers of raising young men to become responsible

[76] 'Zu einem bosen jungen gesellet | welcher gar schnoder stuck pfleget | so einem frummen knaben nit gezimmen': Wickram, *Knabenspiegel*, ed. by Müller, p. 705.

[77] 'Sein groste tugend ist anders nichts | dann liegen schlecken vnd stelen | die knaben von den tugenden zu den lastern zu bringen': Wickram, *Knabenspiegel*, ed. by Müller, p. 705.

[78] Wickram, *Knabenspiegel*, ed. by Müller, pp. 706 and 707.

[79] 'wöllest [...] meinen son wider in die forcht ziehen | vnd kein rut an jm sparen | damit er von solcher üppigen vnd bösen gesellschaft abstand | wider in sein erste zucht vnd scham trette': Wickram, *Knabenspiegel*, ed. by Müller, p. 706.

[80] 'So man das etwann in teütschen schulen braucht | vnd die jungen darauß lernen lesen | das sie dannocht bey spielen ein schrecken empfahen | vnd sich dester mehr in zucht vnd forcht jrer schulmeister geben werden': Wickram, *Knabenspiegel*, ed. by Müller, p. 809.

Pourquoy uoit on ung homme en sa ieuneße,
Estre hazardeux et chauld plus qu'il ne fault,
Et l'homme d'aage affoibly par uiellesse
Est fort craintif et froid en tout assault:
La raison est, car le ieune à deffault
D'experience, et pourtant il luy semble
Que qui le uoid deuant luy fault qu'il tremble,
Tant se confie en son sens trop hastif,
Le uieil a ueu tant de malheur ensemble,
Que par raison il doit estre craintif.

Figure 7. French Emblem, 'Pourquoy uoit on un homme en sa ieunesse Estre hazarduex, & chauld, plus qu'il ne faut?' (Paris, 1539), in Guillaume de La Perrière, *Le Theatre des bons engins, auquel sont contenuz cent Emblemes moraulx*, no. 12. Reproduced from Arthur Henkel and Albrecht Schöne, *Emblemata: Handbuch zur Sinnbildkunst des XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderts*, Ergänzte Neuausgabe (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1990), p. 961. Reproduced with kind permission from J. B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung und Carl Ernst Poeschel Verlag GmbH, Stuttgart, Germany.

members of the family: 'If I was blamed by someone for inventing this story then I would not be without an answer. I would tell him that among the young I daily see similar cases.'[81] Therefore, the *Mirror of young boys* is intended to be a literary counter-construction to its own present, a pragmatic text to serve a market of literate parents. The image of young men who will be judged by their achievement rather than by their original social status responds to the demand of the city burghers (including both patricians and merchants) whose children were the reading audience of the play in the school.

Even more condensed literary genres like the *emblemata* confirm this image of youth. *Emblemata* are visual depictions of mythological situations, whose

[81] 'Sagt schon einer | wo ich die geschichte erfaren hat | würt er mich on antwurt nit finden | dann ich würd sagen bey vnser jugendt | sihe ich noch taglich der gleichen [...] Gott geb gnad | das sich die juget besser vnd in der forcht auffwachs': Wickram, *Knabenspiegel*, ed. by Müller, p. 810.

meaning is described in short as well as in more lengthy paragraphs.[82] A number of these emblems focus on images that are concerned with the behavioural and moral problems surrounding youth. The genre was not only evident in Germany but was well known throughout Europe at this time, and the differences between youth and old age that the well-known image below presents are expressed in an unusually refined French style.[83] In contemporary collections of such sources, one never has to look for long before finding depictions of young men not willing to study,[84] of inconsiderate character,[85] and disrespectful of life's dangers.[86]

Reading these selected letters that were passed between fathers and sons of the Tucher family of course only illustrates one example of intergenerational familial communication; other letter exchanges may well tell a different story, influenced not least by their own political, social, and cultural contexts.[87] Nevertheless, the discursive basis of the letter exchanges under scrutiny here acts as a singular documentation of cross-generational perceptions, particularly from the viewpoint of the older generation, which generally holds a negative image of youth, a stage of life where sin and disobedience need to be checked and tamed. This stage in the life cycle is generated by a conglomerate of religious discourses, of psychological

[82] A number of websites readily contain examples from this genre: Glasgow University, *Glasgow University Emblem Website* <http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk> [accessed 30 November 2010] (especially French sixteenth century); Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Instituts für Deutsche Philologie and Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, *Digitalisierung von ausgewählten Emblembüchern der frühen Neuzeit* <http://mdz1.bib-bvb.de/~emblem/> [accessed 30 November 2010]; University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University Library, *OpenEmblem Portal* <http://media.library.uiuc.edu/projects/oebp/SPT--Home.php> [accessed 15 June 2012]; Herzog August Bibliothek and University of Illinois, *Emblematica Online* <http://www.hab.de/forschung/projekte/emblematica.htm> [accessed 30 November 2010].

[83] The emblem in medieval Europe has received recent critical attention. See Manning, *The Emblem*, especially p. 80 for a discussion about the immediate reception and imitation of Alciato's *Emblemata*. Harms and Peil, *Polyvalenz*, provides a collection of articles that address the international spread of emblematic literature or print. See also Adams and Harper, *The Emblem in Renaissance and Baroque Europe*, for studies on emblems specifically in France, Italy, the Low Countries, Germany, Britain, as well as studies on pan-European traditions. This image originates from La Perrière, *Le Theatre des bons engins*, no. 12, after a first edition in 1536 without images. Image obtained from *Emblemata*, ed. by Henkel and Schöne, p. 961.

[84] *Emblemata*, ed. by Henkel and Schöne, pp. 596 and 1742.

[85] *Emblemata*, ed. by Henkel and Schöne, p. 961.

[86] *Emblemata*, ed. by Henkel and Schöne, pp. 1543 and 1643.

[87] *Die Korrespondenz der Augsburger Patrizierfamilie Endorfer*, ed. by Häberlein, Künast, and Schwanke. For social, economic, and political relations between generations, see the contributions in Häberlein and Kuhn, *Generationen in spätmittelalterlichen Städten*.

assumptions about the nature of emotions, and especially by the urban system of values and honour relating to education of the merchant class. The aim clearly of such discourses was to create trust, reliable ethics, and familial continuity despite the lack of personal control during the boys' absence from Nuremberg. What is striking is how the letters offer such similar stereotypes of youth as those transmitted in the play the *Mirror of Young Boys* and, in a more condensed form, those found in the emblems. Therefore, the preconceptions that are evident and the formative images of ideal and wayward youths presented in these letters are not, it could be argued, ones that relate to a specific family, but rather they are indicative of the attitudes prevailing in a more collective consciousness. On this basis, we may question the sheer possibility of ever determining the component parts that create a cultural narrative of the history of emotions of intergenerational dynamics.[88] Nonetheless, one possible answer has been offered in this study, by exploring the functional nexus of the hierarchical communication.

In other words, the sources studied here suggest that images produced and applied in intergenerational communication were stereotypical but were consciously employed by individuals for desired specific and local effect, thereby creating an individual narrative unique to the family dynamics of the Tuchers. Within the letters, different rhetorical and pragmatical contexts offer a variety of opportunities. For instance, there was a pragmatic dimension to these letters where 'between the lines' messages reveal consciousness of a situational self-representation on the part of both the fathers and the sons. Stereotypical discourses of fathers encouraging or chastising their children, charges, or younger brothers were of use as a means to create or maintain obedience, or conformist remarks were of use to sons as a means to readily create a defence for themselves. Negative images of youth were rhetorically invoked in their letters to maintain and reaffirm the hierarchy within the family. The act of letter writing for the Tucher family is not about mimetic revelations of one's life or hopes for another's way of living, but a craft form that borrows and contextualizes traditional discourses and images of generational norms.

[88] Burke, 'Is There a Cultural History of the Emotions?'.

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Adulthood in Medieval Europe: The Prime of Life or Midlife Crisis?

Deborah Youngs

Since the 1980s a growing interest in the medieval life course has produced a wealth of publications on the age groups of infancy and childhood, and more than a few on adolescence and old age. However, the phase of 'adulthood' has barely an article to its name. There are several possible reasons for this state of affairs. One, which was particularly pertinent to the social sciences until the 1960s, was the view that personality was something developed in childhood and fixed in adolescence.[1] Adulthood was therefore not worth analysing because it was a period of stability and sameness. While this attitude changed among sociologists in the late twentieth century, it can still hold sway in historical and literary studies where medieval adulthood receives limited attention as the culmination of the 'growing up' phases of life.[2] A second, more influential reason is the assumption that to study adults would simply be to study 'history'. Adults are considered the norm: they rule, legislate, initiate wars, and direct cultural developments and, therefore, have been the overwhelming focus of mainstream academic research. As such, adulthood is rarely highlighted as a distinctive aspect of a person's identity. This contrasts with children and the elderly who were, and are, defined by their marginality and their difference from the governing age category.

[1] See the overviews in Fiske, *Middle Age: The Prime of Life?*, pp. 4–12; Pilcher, *Age and Generation in Modern Britain*, pp. 81–82; Schaie and Willis, *Adult Development and Aging*, pp. 4–5. These works also argue that adulthood lags behind the other stages of life in modern sociological studies. The growing interest in this area can be seen in the fifth edition of Bee and Bjorklund, *The Journey of Adulthood*.

[2] Discussions of 'adulthood' appear in Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, chap. 11, and Karras, *From Boys to Men*, chap. 5.

Medieval Life Cycles: Continuity and Change, ed. by Isabelle Cochelin and Karen Smyth
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Nevertheless, while such a silence can be explained, it is still surprising that adulthood has not been problematized in the way that other previously perceived norms — notably masculinity and heterosexuality — have been since the 1990s. In this regard, the study of age lags considerably behind that of gender. Age must be treated less like a physiological category and more as a social construction. While there are common biological developments — such as maximum growth and reproductive capabilities — the conception of adulthood differs across culture, time, and space. Pursuing what it means to be an adult in the medieval period is of particular importance because researchers of the modern world (particularly sociologists) currently argue that the social category of adulthood is a late phenomenon: it therefore follows childhood and adolescence in being considered a modern invention.[3] According to this viewpoint, adulthood developed as a social category through a process of exclusion, whereby children and the elderly were gradually barred from designated 'adult' activities. Central to this process in Britain were the nineteenth-century labour laws (such as the *Factory Acts*), a universal education system, and the institutionalization of retirement, which led to the exclusion of children and the elderly from the world of work. By these measures the two age groups were 'downgraded' in terms of economic output, allowing adults alone to be associated with independence and autonomy.[4]

From this perspective it could be argued — in what might be seen as an interesting reversal of Ariès's theory on childhood — that there was no adulthood in the Middle Ages. In that period, children were not excluded from the workforce; there was no universal education system and no universally fixed retirement age, and therefore no concept of people being classed as economically unproductive simply because of their chronological age. In other words, it is not surprising that there has been no study of medieval adulthood because the concept of adulthood had little meaning in that period.

As a medieval historian, it would be satisfying to take immediate issue with this modern-centred approach and embark on the type of criticism that Shulamith Shahar, Nicholas Orme, and others have produced to demolish the theory of the non-existence of medieval childhood.[5] The problem is that medieval adulthood is

[3] For childhood, there is the classic view by Phillippe Ariès, translated into English as *Centuries of Childhood*, trans. by Baldick. For the thesis of the nineteenth-century 'discovery' of adolescence, see Gillis, *Youth and History*.

[4] Hareven, 'The Last Stage'; Hockey and James, *Growing Up and Growing Old*, particularly pp. 51–54; Hockey and James, *Social Identities across the Life Course*; Pilcher, *Age and Generation in Modern Britain*, p. 83.

[5] Among the most notable rebuttals of the Ariès thesis is Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle*

illusive and conceptually slippery. It is possible, for example, to point to a range of medieval writers who appear to give scant attention to the age group the modern world deems to be adult (roughly those in their twenties to fifties). Mary Dove has written that 'so seldom is there any explicit reference in medieval English literature to an age intervening between youth and old age'.[6] This is important to recognize because historians and literary scholars of medieval Europe often use the terms 'adult' and 'adulthood' without due consideration for what the concepts might mean in a medieval context. Discussions of the life course can appear to reinforce the sense of adulthood as a norm: searches for the existence of childhood and adolescence, for example, often set those life stages against an accepted reality of adulthood.

With these problems in mind, this paper examines more fully the perception and construction of adulthood in the later Middle Ages. Can it be said to have constituted a distinct phase of the life course? If so, to what extent did it conform or contrast with the modern understanding of adulthood? Studies of modern adulthood often stress its ideological supremacy in the life course, while popular culture propagates the idea of a midlife crisis. Was medieval adulthood seen as representing the best years of life or the beginning of existential angst? The discussion will draw on a range of sources for Western Europe during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[7] Inevitably it cannot be exhaustive, but its intention is to suggest future ways in which the question of medieval adulthood can be more fully explored.

In attempting to define stages of the medieval life cycle, one potentially fruitful route is to consider the terminology used in poetical and philosophical discussions of age. This does not, however, offer easy solutions: there was nothing in the languages of Western Europe equivalent to the modern-day term adulthood, with all its social, legal, and political connotations. The term 'adult' was in circulation in the later Middle Ages, but its use and meaning were limited. The word derived from the past participle of the Latin word for growing up, *adolescere*, and means literally 'grown up'. In classical Latin, *adulto/a* (full grown or mature) was most commonly employed in opposition to minors or wards under the ages of twelve or fourteen. Examples can be found in the codex of Justinian, although the term itself does not appear to have a specific legal meaning.[8] It also appeared in

Ages, pp. 1–7 and Orme, *Medieval Children*, chap. 1 and the references therein.

[6] Dove, *The Perfect Age of Man's Life*, p. 5.

[7] This paper is a development of one aspect of my work on the life cycle; see Youngs, *The Life Cycle*.

[8] *Codex of Justinian*, 2. 3. 22: 'Pactum curatoris recipere minorem quantitatem paciscentis adulate aetatis suffragium, ne noceat efficet tutores enim et curatores exigentes pupillis et adultis

more informal works, such as Plautus's comedy *Trinummus* (third century BCE) where Lysiteles wished to marry a woman he described as 'adulta virgo grandis', implying that she was 'grown up' and of marriageable age.[9] The transition of the word to the vernacular was gradual. It was Dante, unsurprisingly, who introduced the term to the Italian language by employing *adulto* figuratively in his *Paradiso* to mean mature or full grown (in this case with reference to understanding).[10] The term entered the French language (as an adjective) in the fourteenth century, the Spanish language in the fifteenth, and the English language (probably adapted from the French) in the sixteenth century.[11] It was also during the later Middle Ages that the term started to be applied, albeit sparingly, to a distinctive age group and to a specific set of behavioural characteristics. In England, 1531, Sir Thomas Elyot in *The boke named the governor* referred to 'suche persones beinge nowe adulte, that is to saye passed theyr childehode as well in maners as in yeres'.[12] The novelty of the term is apparent in the required gloss, but it reflects a desire to explain a mature stage of life. In its early use, therefore, it can be said that the term carried with it the sense of physical completion, and during the later Middle Ages, it became applied to those who had left behind childlike behaviour. This is reflected in the terms 'ripe age', 'full age', and 'mature age' that also appear in English literature sources to describe those fully grown.[13]

A word with much wider usage among Latin writers was *iuventus*. According to Isidore of Seville (d. 636) who applied the term to those aged twenty-eight to fifty, the word derived from *iuvare* meaning 'to help'. Later writers followed suit: Dante used the vernacular equivalent *gioventute* in his *Convivio* to mean 'that age that can be helpful'. He applied it to the age group twenty-four to forty-five and described its qualities as temperance, fortitude, loyalty, courtesy, and justice. The inference is that, at this stage of life, a person is no longer a dependant (like a child), but someone capable of helping himself and others.[14] At one level

debitum, non etiam remittentes praestant obligratioris liberationem.' *Corpus iuris civilis*, ed. by Krueger and others.

[9] Plautus, *Trinummus*, ed. by Ussing, Act II, Scene 2, p. 275. See also the definition of the life cycle by Eugenius of Toledo (d. 657) in Cochelin's introduction in this volume: his *aetas adulta* follows childhood and precedes *iuventa*.

[10] Dante, *Divine Comedy*, trans. by Singleton, *Paradiso*, VII. 58–60.

[11] For example: Casares, *Diccionario histórico de la lengua española*, 'adulto/ta'; Imbs and Quemada, *Trésor de la langue française*, 'adulte'.

[12] Elyot, *The Boke Named the Gouernour*, ed. by Croft, chap. 1, II, 2.

[13] Dove, *The Perfect Age of Man's Life*, chap. 1.

[14] Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum*, ed. by Lindsay, XI. 2. 16. Dante, *Il Convivio*, trans. by

it looks like a promising description of adulthood, but *iuventus* is problematic and its definition and usage has proved challenging for researchers of the classical age through to the early modern period. It cannot be seen as a precise synonym for adulthood because both in Latin and the vernacular languages it was a term denoting youth that could embrace adolescence. While young men might physically be adult in the sense of completed growth, the descriptor 'youth', particularly in relation to a group or behaviour, most often characterized a person who had yet to secure full independence. Criminal trials in Venice, for example, employed the phrase *mos iuventum* (nature of youth) when condemning the youthful (that is, reprehensible) exploits of the accused.[15]

The lack of a clear terminology for 'adulthood' is most visible in the age-of-man or ages-of-life scheme, which had been inherited from the classical world and was developed by a broad range of medieval writers. As is well known, this saw life as a series of fixed stages that each individual went through in a set order from birth to death.[16] The number of stages differed across Europe, sometimes in the work of the same author, and could range anywhere between three and twelve. While the terms and stages of infancy, adolescence, and old age appear with some regularity, there is no term that ever clearly denotes adulthood. Nor is it easy to pinpoint a common stage. As Michael Goodich noted in his study of the stages of life: 'following adolescence the pattern tended to break down'.[17] In four stages, it was likely to occupy the second stage, often called *iuventus*, or in the case of the work of Avicenna (980–1037), the *aetas consistendi*; but it could, as in the thirteenth-century writings of Philip of Navarre, be divided between *jovant* (twenty to forty) and *moien age* (forty to sixty). The situation is even less clear in discussions of seven or more ages where short periods are attached to planets or other natural phenomena. Thomas of Cantimpré (d. 1272) called the fourth of his seven stages *robor*, reflecting the perceived strength and vigour of the age group thirty-five to fifty; while Jean Froissart (1337–1410) divided the

Lansing, p. 218. The term appears exclusively used in the masculine.

[15] Eyben, *Restless Youth in Ancient Rome*, trans. by Daly, p. 46; Crouzet-Pavan, 'The Flower of Evil', pp. 173–76, 182; Dove, *The Perfect Age of Man's Life*, p. 15. In John Trevisa's translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus's *De proprietatibus rerum*, he comments on his use of the word 'youth' to translate *iuventus*: 'Here I take þis englisch for þis latyn iuventus. And iuventus is here oþerwise taken þan oure comoun speche usith' (Trevisa, *On the Properties of Things*, ed. by Seymour, bk v, p. 290).

[16] The most thorough discussion in English remains Burrow, *The Ages of Man*. For the pre-thirteenth-century definitions, see Cochelin's introduction in this volume.

[17] Goodich, *From Birth to Old Age*, p. 143.

years twenty-four to fifty into three, symbolized by the Sun, Mars, and Jupiter respectively.[18]

While we may struggle for stable terminology, what is constant, at least from the thirteenth century onwards, is the prioritizing of a middle phase of life, flanked by developing adolescence and declining old age. This stage — which Dove labelled the 'in between age' — was metaphorically depicted as midday in the day of life, the apex of the wheel of life, or the top of an arc.[19] The powerful metaphor of upward motion towards a dominant midlife is clearly depicted in the well-known example of the wheel of life in the fourteenth-century psalter of Robert de Lisle, where the highest point is occupied by an enthroned kingly figure.[20] Not only did this imagery show midlife at the top, but at the point of rest (Avicenna's *aetas consistendi*). This stage — whether it was called *iuventus*, *vir*, or *vir perfectus* in these depictions — was commonly visualized as a plateau and characterized as a stable, static period, neither climbing up nor down. While to twenty-first-century minds such stasis may have negative overtones, to medieval commentators only good could be experienced in stability, however precarious it turned out to be.

Being at the midpoint of life meant occupying the central stage in life. It was the point where the body was in balance: it had all the advantages of youth and old age — physical excellence and a rational outlook respectively — but none of their excesses and defects. Midlife, for example, did not suffer the humoural imbalances of fickle youth, which was enslaved to passion and turmoil. The sense of balance was heavily influenced by Aristotle who promoted the idea of a person's ideal moral mean. For him, 'middle age' was the 'perfect age' of life, and medieval writers followed his lead. The Scottish poet of *Ratis Raving* described the fifth stage of life (lying between thirty and fifty) as the age that had the advantages of both youth and old age: 'part of gud 3outhed and of gret eild' (parts of good youth and great age). It was a time that 'ringis the perfeccioune of resone and discreccion' (resounded with the perfection of reason and discretion).[21] Similarly, in the work of Giles of Rome, translated into English in the fourteenth century by John Trevisa, the man in his mid-twenties comes to 'folle perfectoun' (full per-

[18] Detailed discussion can be found in Burrow, *The Ages of Man*, and a good summary can be found in Shahar, *Growing Old in the Middle Ages*, pp. 15–17; Froissart, *An Anthology*, ed. and trans. by Figg and Palmer, pp. 1616–1704.

[19] Dove, *The Perfect Age of Man's Life*, p. 27.

[20] Now BL, MS Arundel 83, II, fol. 126^{v}. The Lisle wheel features regularly in discussions of the life cycle in English literature. See, for example, Dove, *The Perfect Age of Man's Life*, chap. 10.

[21] *Ratis Raving*, ed. by Lumby, pp. 65, 70.

fection) because he 'cunne rewle hemself' (can govern himself). At that point 'al þat is to preisying in children oþer in olde men is ifounde in men of mene age, and no thing þat is to be blaming in children oþer in older men is ifounde in men of mene age' (all that is praiseworthy in children or in old men is to be found in middle-aged men, while nothing that is negative in childhood or in older age is to be found in middle-aged men).[22]

As these and other examples indicate, the middle stage of life could span various ages. There was an emphasis on constancy across the ages. For the poet of *Ratis Raving* all the years in the fifth age are 'to comende fore thai ar gud at athir ende' (to be commended because they are good throughout all the years).[23] Nevertheless, a consensus had emerged concerning where the peak of physical perfection lay: the early to mid-thirties. The choice was strongly influenced by the Bible. Thirty-five was midway in the allotted three-score years and ten, and there were clear associations with the life of Christ: He was baptized at thirty and was crucified at thirty-three before experiencing bodily decay. In popular literature the primacy of the early thirties was promoted in stories of the 'fons iuventutis' (the fountain of youth), here used with its 'adult' overtones. Travellers went in search of these paradisiacal streams, some believing them to be in the Holy Land, others in the Nile, while John Mandeville claimed he had drunk of them during his travels. These mythical, rejuvenating waters were supposed to 'cure' the ageing process and turn the grizzled old back into agile men. The desire was to achieve a permanent age of thirty-three, the perfect age.[24] Alternatively, dying in one's thirties, in the prime of life, would mean that — like Christ — a person had yet to decline. Christine de Pizan described the premature death of her husband at thirty-four as striking him down in his 'flower'.[25] For a minority (and probably mainly a literary one), it could even offer the chance of immortal fame. In Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, Duke Theseus reasoned that it was an honour for a man to die 'in excellence and flour' (in excellence and prime).[26] It was 'best, as for a worthy fame, to dyen when that he is best of name' (best to achieve noteworthy fame to die when he has his best reputation). No specific age was attached

[22] Trevisa, *The Governance of Kings and Princes*, ed. by Fowler, Briggs, and Remley, bk II, pt II, p. 243, and also bk I, pt IV, p. 149.

[23] *Ratis Raving*, ed. by Lumby, ll. 1568–69, p. 70.

[24] For a recent discussion, see Pleij, *Dreaming of Cockaigne*, trans. by Webb, chap. 18.

[25] Christine de Pizan, *The Vision*, trans. by McLeod and Willard, bk III, 5–6, pp. 94–95.

[26] While 'flower' is normally associated with youth, Mary Dove has shown that it could also be used for completed maturity and act as a synonym for 'best age' or 'prime': Dove, *The Perfect Age of Man's Life*, p. 17.

to the strapping knight Arcite, whose death had inspired Theseus's words, but readers interpreted the text to see Arcite dying in his prime. At least this appears to be the view of the Cheshire gentleman Humphrey Newton (1466–1536) who transcribed these lines into his commonplace book, glossing them 'Howe deth is best in medyll age'.[27]

In terms of literary and philosophical discussions of age, therefore, it is possible to identify a phase of life — midlife — that appears to correspond with a concept of 'adulthood' as a state of physical and psychological maturity. However, where these viewpoints differ from modern definitions of adulthood is that they do not identify the life stage on the grounds of exclusion. Rather, midlife incorporated within itself the good elements of youth and old age. The lack of clear terminology in philosophical discussions reflects the view that midlife bridges youth and old age. The only point of exclusion is that it did not exhibit elements deemed negative in those age groups. Midlife is written in very positive terms: it is an achievement, and its qualities include strength, independence, and responsibility. It also meant that while midlife had a rough chronological position in the life course, medieval adulthood, as 'maturity', could only be acquired gradually and would differ according to the individual.

The prioritizing of midlife and the gradual accomplishment of maturity found expression in legal codes and work practices across Western Europe. It was promoted by families, clans, and local and central governing bodies who guarded the boundaries to 'adult' status by dictating when a person would acquire full rights and responsibilities. There was no single route to legal adulthood, although most Western law codes included a concept of legal majority. Laws and customs decreed when a person could marry, pay taxes, inherit property, or take up a government position, although the ages set for the various rights and responsibilities only accidentally coincided. Some rights were granted in the early teens (marriage and taxes), while other responsibilities were not ceded until the early twenties (such as inheritance by knight's tenure in England). In some areas of Southern Europe, which were heavily influenced by Roman Law, twenty-five could be invoked as the age of majority, regardless of sex or social class.[28] There was some association with biological development and the onset of puberty. The *sachsenspiegel*, com-

[27] Chaucer, 'The Knight's Tale', l. 3048, pp. 3055–56; Oxford, Bodl. Libr., MS Latin Misc.c.66, fol. 2^{r}. See Karen Smyth's essay in this volume for a study of this noble age of prime life in John Lydgate's historical writing.

[28] Examples can be found in Holdsworth and others, *A History of English Law*, III, 510; Thomas, 'Age and Authority in Early Modern England'; Grubb, *Provincial Families of the Renaissance*, p. 90.

piled in 1235, offers an interesting example from German jurisprudence. Here man attains majority at the completion of his twenty-first year, but 'in case of a man whose age is not known, one can be sure he is of age if he has hair on his face, under both armpits, and down below'.[29] Nevertheless, the ages were mainly selected because culturally they were linked to perceived capability and responsibility. Guilds laid down strict minimum ages or minimum training periods before 'working adulthood' was reached. In London, the Grocers' guild ordered that no-one complete their training until they reached twenty-five or twenty-six.[30]

With this type of information, it could be argued that certain sections of medieval European society did identify adulthood on the basis of exclusion, which served to create less socially active members of the workforce. In the countryside, where physical labour was at a premium, children only carried out the menial tasks; they were not expected to operate ploughs and carts. Studies of English estates have shown that the 'normal' unit of labour was considered the healthy male adult. If a person was under or over certain ages or suffering various disabilities (including being female), employers would offer lower wages.[31] At Glastonbury Abbey, the *garciones* were the subordinate, poorly paid persons without land, the legal term implying a state below adulthood.[32] In urban areas and for skilled work, the system of apprenticeship ensured that adolescents went through a long, rigorous training period before they were allowed to work for themselves. Their status as semi-dependants was underlined in that they were single, lived with another family, and had limited disposable income.[33] Surveys of a range of professional positions around Europe show them to be overwhelmingly under the control of men in their forties and fifties.[34]

Yet the difference to modern times is clear: it was qualities not chronological age that mattered. Even when a person reached a particular age, rights were not automatically granted in the way they would be in the modern world. Councils, guilds, governments, and particularly families could yet decide that someone was not ready for social or political adulthood. As Crouzet-Pavan has commented

[29] *The Saxon Mirror*, trans. by Dobozy, p. 81.

[30] Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 203.

[31] Bardsley, 'Women's Work Reconsidered', p. 5.

[32] Fox, 'Exploitation of the Landless', pp. 520, 531.

[33] Epstein, *Wage Labor and Guilds*, pp. 106–07, 111; Nicholas, 'Child and Adolescent Labour', pp. 1111–12; Goldberg, 'Masters and Men in Later Medieval England', p. 59; Karras, *From Boys to Men*, chap. 4.

[34] As shown in Guenée's research of key secular and religious personnel: Guenée, 'L'Âge des personnes authentiques', p. 276.

in relation to her Venetian sources, the 'age of full responsibility and the age of majority did not coincide'.[35] Full citizenship was only given to those society felt could be held personally responsible for their actions. Hanawalt makes a strong case for adults acting as 'doorkeepers' to the youths on the threshold of adulthood.[36] Lying behind this view and legislation was the prevalent belief that children, adolescents, and youths were naturally violent and unruly.[37] In contrast to mature adults, they would be governed by passion rather than reason. Local governing bodies could alter their minimum ages to delay the onset of social adulthood, and there is some evidence to show that ages of responsibility began to creep upwards during the fifteenth century. In Basel the city council decided to raise the age that a person could do business from fourteen to twenty because they thought teenage boys were too careless with property.[38] At the same time, it is difficult to determine levels of responsibility and independence in areas like northern Italy, where patriarchal structures made the age of majority only a theoretical step towards independence as fathers dictated their son's progress. Grubb has shown that for men of Vicenza and Verona there was no formal recognition of economic or political maturity. Few men were emancipated from their fathers' authority; taxation records included sons in their fathers' households while fathers remained alive; and council membership could be bought.[39]

It will be evident to researchers of gender that the criteria discussed so far are those regularly used to define manhood: strength, rationality, self-control, moderation, independence, and self-sufficiency. There is a danger that focusing on such criteria could serve to ignore women or label them semi-adults. Classical and medieval writings developed the view that women had imperfect bodies, virtually childlike in their underdevelopment. They were not viewed as rational beings; they were never meant to be completely independent either financially or emotionally; and society never accorded them full adult wages or public status.[40] The 'ages of man' literature is largely gender exclusive with less than a handful of texts concerning women. Discussion on the 'prime of life' for women has usually taken two forms. One considers the medieval male perspective, which saw the

[35] Crouzet-Pavan, 'The Flower of Evil', p. 176.

[36] Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, chap. 11.

[37] See the articles by Dzon, Cochelin, Sherwood, and Kuhn in this volume.

[38] Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 203; Youngs, *The Life Cycle*, p. 155.

[39] Grubb, *Provincial Families of the Renaissance*, pp. 2, 90.

[40] For one example of an extensive and growing bibliography, see Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference*, pp. 180–81.

ideal life stage of women as maidenhood; the emphasis is on the achievement of beauty, the onset of reproductive capabilities, and a naïve (and therefore easily manipulated) demeanour. Mary Dove, Kim Phillips, and Jessica Cooke have argued that youth should be seen as the equivalent 'perfect age' for women.[41] It is a view that has some support in the images of the youthful Virgin and the descriptions of several female saints. Another set of studies has been influenced by modern notions of individual freedoms and locates a woman's prime in her widowhood, or at least post-childbearing age.[42]

There are problems with both approaches, but what is at issue here is that they place women's prime outside of adulthood, or at least allow little overlap with the perfect age of man. What they ignore is the extent to which women achieved full status in the same way as their fellow men. They were legally different to minors: in Brigstock full citizenship was given to those who could be responsible for their actions regardless of gender.[43] Women were not entirely excluded from discussions of midlife, and some writers saw advantages for women in their thirties. The physician Michele Savanorola recommended that wet nurses be mature women between thirty-two and thirty-five years of age because their milk would be superior to younger women. Likewise philosophers influenced by Aristotle's work on the generation of animals argued that while the young and the elderly were likely to produce females, the middle aged would produce strong males.[44]

More importantly, it is worth emphasizing that medieval adulthood was not constructed in terms of citizenship, economic productivity, and independence, as it is in the modern world. Rather it was in terms of the fulfilment of expected social roles and the ability to look after oneself and others. In this regard, the issues of marriage and parenthood are paramount. Girls were brought up to see marriage and parenthood as their goals; their achievement would see them fulfil that destiny, making them head and manager of a household and responsible for a series of dependents. It is the case that those who had married at very young ages would not automatically be treated as adults, but an important landmark had been accomplished. There is a gender emphasis in these criteria, but marriage and parenthood were not only entry points to maturity for women. Medieval society

[41] Dove, *The Perfect Age of Man's Life*, chap. 3; Cooke, 'Nice Young Girls and Wicked Old Witches'; Phillips, *Medieval Maidens*, pp. 43–51.

[42] For example Mulder-Bakker and Nip, *The Prime of their Lives*. See also the article by Sue Niebrzydowski in this volume.

[43] Bennett, *Women in the Medieval English Countryside*, p. 108.

[44] Bell, *How to Do It*, p. 129; Biller, *The Measure of Multitude*, pp. 258 and 347.

laid great emphasis on family life. Marriage has long been a crucial turning point in a person's life cycle. Grubb has argued that in Verona and Vicenza, 'marriage was given centrality because the region lacked other rites to mark a transition into adulthood', and this could apply to many areas of Europe.[45] For the medieval man, it rendered him the head of household and highlighted his roles as provider and protector. Families saw it as a means to cure youthful passions and the mark that an individual had become responsible. This can be seen in the instances where some of the highest employment positions were only open to those who had committed themselves to marriage. In Brigstock in rural England, marriage was the route to local offices. In general it was only married men who could become jurors, reeves, or aletasters. Bennett has shown how the time between marriage and the taking up of official service could be just a matter of months.[46]

It is evident, therefore, that a prominent discourse in medieval literature promoted the middle years of life as the zenith of physical and rational development. According to this discourse, midlife was, in the words of Mary Dove, something to 'exalt in', an age possessed of exuberance, strength, and maturity.[47] It was a desired state. Words used to signify this stage were in stark contrast to the terms employed for other age divisions, which served to signify a lack. The Latin term *infantia*, for example, was said to derive from the child's inability to speak because the teeth had yet to fully develop.[48] Midlife was not about becoming but about having attained something. However, it was no 'natural' state and maturity had to be constantly demonstrated or performed; its retention relied upon it being free from any signs of mental or physical impairment. This distancing helped to delineate it. Just as 'man' has been defined as 'not woman', so 'adult' can be defined as 'not child'; the two groups stand in binary opposition. When in the fourteenth-century romance *Jehan de Saintré*, the thirteen-year-old hero went to exit a room with the men of the household, his lady ordered him to remain for 'vous n'este pas au compte des homes'. At that age, Jehan was merely a *garçon*, a knight in training, and not 'counted among the men'.[49] While manhood did not equal adulthood (it would apply to youths as well), quotations such as this indicate the existence of minor and majority ages that separated children and adolescents from adult life.

[45] Grubb, *Provincial Families of the Renaissance*, p. 2. See also Chojnacki, *Women and Men in Renaissance Venice*.

[46] Bennett, *Women in the Medieval English Countryside*, p. 104.

[47] Dove, *The Perfect Age of Man's Life*, chap. 1.

[48] Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum*, ed. by Lindsay, XI. 2. 9–10.

[49] Antoine de la Sale, *Jehan de Saintré*, ed. by Blanchard, p. 45.

At the same time, those men and women who failed to meet the criteria, or did not sustain the qualities of competence and independence, might see adult status taken away from them. For those of advancing years, deteriorating physical and cognitive skills laid open the possibility that they would be demoted, age-wise, and become associated with children. The infantilization of the old has a long history in European literature, dating back to at least the work of Aristophanes.[50] By the late Middle Ages, the metaphor was in common use. When her elderly husband became incapacitated, Margery Kempe described how he had 'turnyd childisch a3en and lakkyd reson' (become childish agen and lacked reason).[51] Alternatively, and in contrast to the modern day, those later in life who were still active and retained control of themselves and power over others could extend full working adulthood for many years, staving off the descriptor 'old'.

However, it needs to be considered whether midlife was always written in such glowing terms. Did medieval people expect to achieve perfection in their earthly lives? It is necessary to consider another, far less discussed discourse that circulated in the late Middle Ages. This focused particular attention on the thirties as an age of uncertainty, even angst, the midlife stage as an unsettling period of transition.

During the twentieth century, there emerged a widespread belief that adults experienced a transition period in midlife that for some reached a crisis point. The term 'midlife crisis', first coined by Elliot Jaques and advanced as an idea by researchers such as David Levinson, came to be applied to a period of self-assessment and reappraisal. Jaques connected the condition to a person's growing awareness of mortality, while others have seen it encompassing worries about the future, the onset of poor health, and a negative view of work and family life.[52] This seductive theory has become controversial and increasingly discredited in academic study, although it continues to receive widespread public support in the West. Since the 1980s, an ideological shift away from the life-cycle emphasis on fixed stages has also undermined the deterministic notion that people experience similar feelings at a set time.[53]

[50] For a discussion, see Hockey and James, *Growing Up and Growing Old*, p. 3.

[51] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Meech and Allen, pp. 179–81. On Margery Kempe's own life cycle, see Niebrzydowski's article in this volume.

[52] Jaques, 'Death and the Mid-Life Crisis', particularly pp. 502, 506. Levinson, *The Seasons of Man's Life*.

[53] Fiske, *Middle Age*, p. 45; Schaie and Willis, *Adult Development and Aging*, pp. 71–72; Bee and Bjorklund, *The Journey of Adulthood*, p. 371; Cohen, *The Creative Age*. But see Hepworth, 'The Middle Phase of Life'. For criticisms of life-cycle theory, see Hareven, 'The Life

Nevertheless, this has not dispensed with the idea that certain ages are predisposed to certain qualities. Recent studies no longer see adulthood as the end of a fixed growing-up period, but as a journey in itself, one filled with new responsibilities, challenges, and frustrations that are both age-specific and historically confined. The journey of medieval adulthood has yet to be fully explored, but we must be careful not to impose modern worries on to past peoples. Take, for example, the different pressures on modern and medieval adults. Lower life expectancy and an earlier introduction to the world of work meant that medieval adults were less likely than their modern counterparts to be sandwiched between two dependent generations: elderly parents who need physical care, and living-at-home children who demand financial assistance.[54] Despite this, modern sentiments have been transferred to the period of demographics crisis that emerged in the wake of the Black Death. This was a time when age distributions became skewed in some communities as periodic plague attacks increasingly hit the less immunized younger generations, leading to an ageing population.[55] In commenting on this situation in their famous study of fifteenth-century Tuscan society, David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber described the adult age group (twenty to fifty-nine) as 'crushed between a plethora of old people and a swarm of little children'.[56] Similarly Jacques Rossiaud believed that the selective mortality of the plague caused French towns to 'buckle under the weight of the elderly'.[57] While contemporaries did note that the young were hardest hit, such negative terminology against older people is not to be found in contemporary accounts of the plague. What lies behind these phrases is the modern idea of adults being the only economically productive group.

That is not to say that medieval adults never expressed frustration with older generations (or indeed younger ones). It is possible to list some grievances that have resonances with modern-day gripes. Northern Italy provides numerous examples of minimum age criteria for the highest official positions that drew discontent among younger members of society. The well-known case of

Course and Aging', p. 3; Bryman and others, *Rethinking the Life Cycle*; and Pilcher, *Age and Generation in Modern Britain*, chap. 2.

[54] For this 'modern' condition of adulthood and especially the middle aged, see Schaie and Willis, *Adult Development and Aging*, pp. 56–58.

[55] Minois, *History of Old Age*, pp. 210–11; Razi, *Life, Marriage and Death in a Medieval Parish*, p. 151; Youngs, *The Life Cycle*, pp. 31–32.

[56] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans and their Families*, p. 183.

[57] 'Les effets des mortalités sélectives pouvaient faire ployer la ville sous le poids des vieux': Rossiaud, 'Crises et consolidations', p. 487.

Venice's gerontocracy illustrates how the value placed on maturity and experience meant that some men already advanced in age were still awaiting promotion to the higher ranks.[58] The belief in a social clock can also be seen in literature, particularly French poetry like *Quinze joies de marriage*, where generational conflict occurred over a mature heir and his still-living elderly parent.[59] To Barbara Hanawalt, the situation where people were chronologically mature, but still in a dependent status, created what she called 'second-class adults'.[60] For women, their social clock was closely connected to their biological clock: it was generally assumed that marriage and parenthood would be well under way during the twenties. Those who remained single beyond thirty — the age at which Chaucer's January saw women as 'old boef' (old meat) — would find it very difficult to fulfil their social roles as wives and mothers.[61] Undoubtedly there were frustrations among those wishing to progress their adult journeys, ones that could only occur during the adult years. However, they should not be seen as universal or happening at a fixed time, and were not perceived as characteristic of that age phase.

Nevertheless, there were those in late medieval Europe who did judge midlife itself to be unsettling and the thirties as a period of uncertainty even angst. Perhaps not surprisingly they tend to be poets and philosophers, the social type that first led Jaques to formulate the idea of a midlife crisis. Instead of focusing on the potential of the prime of life, what engaged their attention was the thirties as an age of transition: the move (perhaps even clash) of one age stage to another. These writers were not so much fixated with the need to move onwards and upwards, as struggling with the march of time. The prime of life retained its sense of bridging youth and old age, but the emphasis in their writings was on it marking the end of youthful exuberance and the onset of old age. Trevisa, translating Bartholomaeus Anglicus, wrote of a 'middle age' where youth has passed and a person is in 'þe first elde' (the first age).[62] While it was the case that several writers viewed the passing of adolescence with relief, it had nevertheless been the opportunity to develop and change. Midlife, in contrast, was a time when life had become more fixed; character traits and career plans had long been defined. To the fifteenth-century humanist Matteo Palmieri, thirty-five-year-olds had already made the decision as to which direction their lives were heading; there was no

[58] Finlay, 'The Venetian Republic as a Gerontocracy'; Chojnacki, *Women and Men in Renaissance Venice*, pp. 227–29.

[59] Jeay, 'Sexuality and Family in Fifteenth-Century France'.

[60] Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, p. 198; Youngs, *The Life Cycle*, p. 105.

[61] Chaucer, 'The Merchant's Tale', ll. 1420–22, p. 156.

[62] Trevisa, *On the Properties of Things*, ed. by Seymour, p. 292.

point of return. For Bernadino of Siena, the age around thirty-two to thirty-three was a turning point in male lives that dictated their adult sexuality. Sodomy, he preached, must be forsaken in youth for 'this cursed vice is rarely abandoned, especially when you have grown old in it and pass 32 years of age'.[63] This was not the only voice that considered the thirties as the start of old age. For Erasmus, admittedly a man who seemed to suffer with his health, old age replaced youth after the completion of 'the seventh five-year span', that is, thirty-five.[64] This, it must be noted, is about the start rather than the full onset of old age and concerns early signs rather than decrepitude. Yet these writers did recognize an earlier old age than would normally be assumed in the modern world: midlife here is not about acquisition, but about loss.

Key in this respect, especially for the poets, was the association between youth and love. The accepted laws of love poetry deemed it no subject for the elderly, and this did not simply mean the sixty-year-old figures of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, ridiculed for their inappropriate behaviour. It also included those who had only just left youth. For some writers, like the Welsh poet Dafydd ap Gwilym, youth's passing was a bitter experience. His poem *The Magpie Gives her Counsel* draws on a time when a man with early signs of age first realizes that he is past the time of love-making.[65] A writer who focused squarely on this issue was Jean Froissart in his 1373 poem, the *Joli buisson de jonece*. In this 'dream vision' the narrator is thirty-five years old when he falls asleep on a November day and is transported back to Springtime, his youth, and to a meeting with a past love. When he eventually awakens he is back in chilly November and with a new, mature reflection on life. Throughout the poem, Froissart, as the narrator, presents himself on the threshold of old age and as someone who has lost the freshness and creative energy of youth. Peter Dembowski describes this farewell to youth as a 'mid-life crisis', one in which the narrator is full of regrets.[66] Yet this foray into the past also marks an important transition and a new stage in life, an 'aultre ordenance nouvelle' (another new ordinance) as the narrator's thoughts move away from courtly love (which he now sees as futile) to the more important condition of his soul.[67]

[63] Bell, *How to Do It*, p. 178; Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships*, pp. 39–40.

[64] Gilbert, 'When Did a Man in the Renaissance Grow Old?'. For further examples of male writers commenting on the signs of ageing while in their late thirties, see Shahar, *Growing Old in the Middle Ages*, pp. 19–23.

[65] Dafydd ap Gwilym, *His Poems*, trans. by Thomas, pp. 129–31.

[66] Dembowski, *Jean Froissart and his 'Meliador'*, pp. 36–39.

[67] Froissart, *Le joli buisson de jonece*, ed. and trans. by Figg and Palmer, l. 459, p. 284.

William Kibler draws parallels with Froissart's own life, arguing that the poem marked a 'watershed in his own career': Froissart was himself around thirty-five when he composed the *Joli buisson*, which was to be the last of his *dits amoureux*. Subsequently he focused on his better-known prose chronicles of the Hundred Years' War, an appropriate choice given that, in Froissart's *Joli buisson*, the age of thirty-five ushers in the stage ruled by Mars.[68] This was a time in life that saw a person reject the vanities of youth, including the inappropriate love poetry, and come to understand the meaning of wealth and power.[69] For Froissart, who had at this point become a priest, the purpose of a person on earth now appeared to be 'either to lose yourself or to save yourself'. His *Joli buisson* is therefore a working through of his desire to turn towards God, after first overcoming the temptations (that is, the negative behaviour) of youth.[70]

Such a sentiment is similarly expressed in those works where the onset of maturity appears coterminous with the point at which a person realizes he or she has misspent youth. John Lydgate and Thomas Hoccleve, to name just a couple of Middle English poets, seem to present time in midlife and old age as one long stretch of regretting the sins and ignorance of youth.[71] One of the most interesting comments in this regard was written by François Villon (*c.* 1431–*c.* 1474), who began his *Testament* 'In the thirtieth year of my life, after I had swallowed all my shame'. He looks back in anger at a time when he loved too much, spent too much, and studied too little. He has now left youth behind, and feels its loss, but presents himself in a kind of limbo: no longer foolish, but not yet wise. Villon had not yet reconciled himself to the quieter years, nor made the choice of which road to travel. The device of a testament underlines the sense that this is very much a spiritual limbo. Villon is hovering between life and death, as a testament writer; hovering between salvation and perdition, as a vulnerable thirty-year-old; and all the while hovering between youth and old age as a 'midlifer'.[72]

[68] Kibler, '*Le joli buisson de jonece*', pp. 64–66.

[69] 'que cest davoir et de possiance': Froissart, *Le joli buisson de jonece*, ed. and trans. by Figg and Palmer, ll. 1654–55, p. 328.

[70] 'pour toi perdre et pour toi sauver': Froissart, *Le joli buisson de jonece*, ed. and trans. by Figg and Palmer, l. 5365. p. 472; Kibler, '*Le joli buisson de jonece*: Froissart's Midlife Crisis', p. 69; Lassahn, 'Pseudo-Autobiography and the Role of the Poet', pp. 125–27. For comparison with the writings of Charles d'Orleans, see the discussion in Burrow, *The Ages of Man*, pp. 183–85.

[71] See 'The Testament of John Lydgate', in Lydgate, *The Minor Poems*, ed. by MacCracken, no. 68; Hoccleve, 'La Male Regale', ed. by Ellis, esp. ll. 65–80, p. 66. On these two authors, see Karen Smyth's article in this volume.

[72] 'En l'an de mon trentiesme aage, que toutes mes hontes j'eus beues': Villon, *Poésies*

In other words, the maturation of reason and sobriety brought with it a considerable amount of soul-searching. This was part of a strong literary tradition that saw the early thirties as a period of spiritual development: it was the age at which Christ had begun His teaching and Saint Augustine had converted to Christianity. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, we find examples of those who saw the thirties as the starting point of a new, inner journey, the point where they began to take stock of life thus far experienced. Julian of Norwich, for example, wanted to experience sickness and suffering 'when I ware xxxti yeare olde'.[73] Arguably the most well-known example is that of Dante who embarked on his literary descent into Hell at thirty-five. His *Divina Commedia* famously begins 'in the middle of the journey of our life'.[74] The device can also be found in Christine de Pizan's semi-autobiographical *Vision*, which she began around the age of forty. Christine, who certainly knew her Dante, wrote of experiencing her vision at the point where 'I had already finished half of my pilgrimage'. She is at the point in her life where she wishes to assess her reputation and describes herself as a traveller who looks back over paths trodden and ahead to the inevitable end.[75]

Midlife was therefore the point both where an individual should come closest to perfection in their earthly lives, and where a person realized, through self-evaluation, just how far he or she was away from reaching that ideal. For medieval moral and religious philosophers, the process of self-assessment was a vital part of life or, more specifically, of the soul's development. There was recognition that, while a person's physical and rational potential had been reached, spiritual achievements would require a much longer process.[76] Indeed midlife was not without its own particular sins and burdens. Froissart had alluded to the pride, haughtiness, and combative nature of the age of Mars, and this is a theme of several Middle English poems. The sober 'Middle life' in *The Parlement of the Three Ages* (representing the age group thirty to sixty) spends his time fixated with money and the follies of youth, while *The Mirror of the periods of man's life* presents a picture of the adult male as a victim of pride, anger, gluttony, and lech-

complètes, ed. by Thiry; Fein, *A Reading of Villon's Testament*, pp. 29–30; Hunt, *Villon's Last Will*, p. 35.

[73] Julian of Norwich, *A Book of Showings*, ed. by Colledge and Walsh, ll. 38–39, p. 289 (taken from the long text). The editors suggest that Julian's desire to suffer when she was thirty (which did come to pass) derived from her wish to associate herself with Christ: p. 204 n. 46.

[74] 'Nel mezzo del camin di nostra vita': Dante, *Divine Comedy*, trans. by Singleton, *Inferno*, canto 1.1, p. 2.

[75] Christine de Pizan, *The Vision*, trans. by McLeod and Willard, bk 1.1 (p. 18).

[76] Burrow, *The Ages of Man*.

ery.[77] Nor does 'Manhood' (who became so named at twenty-one) in the English morality play *Mundus et Infans* act in a perfect state. In enjoying the peak of his power, he exhibits a range of new sins, notably pride. He sees 'all is my handwork' and describes himself as 'lord and leader'. It is a common boast echoed in other literature, such as a fifteenth-century poem on the seven ages, which has a king at noon declare 'all þis world was at my wylle' (all of this world was at my command).[78]

The intended moral message lying behind this literature was to reflect and repent. Half of life had now been completed, and time was running out. The onset of maturity brought both the cause and the cure for the seduction of power. It was a call to put one's strength to good use.[79] In didactic literature, the arrival of Conscience in midlife appears to mark a new stage in a person's development. In *Mundus et Infans*, the dialogue between Manhood and Conscience charts the move from Manhood's preoccupation with power in the early scenes (and years) to the more sober questioning of his soul in the later ones. In this way, the progress of spiritual life (becoming virtuous) was connected to the process of becoming and demonstrating manliness (virility). All told, 'medieval adulthood' was the time when life's decisions became more complex. The ages of man literature might present the stage as stable, but the message of didactic writings urged change. Being 'grown up' did not mean the end of a journey, an achievement to be taken for granted: it was a stage that brought increased responsibilities and the start of a new spiritual course.

Ambiguities and contradictions are to be expected in defining age divisions in any period and culture. This is the case even in the modern period where adulthood has been described as a 'catch-all category'.[80] The pursuit of medieval adulthood is one that trips over definitions and caveats. Nevertheless, the evidence suggests that medieval society recognized a stage of life where individuals reached full bodily and psychological growth. In philosophical discussions it followed youth and was distinct from decrepitude, but incorporated the strength and vigour of the young and the wisdom and experience of old age. In the real world of

[77] *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, ed. by Turville-Petre; note the description of middle age in lines 136–51; Burrow, *The Ages of Man*, p. 71.

[78] *Mundus and Infans*, ed. by Lester, ll. 160–287, pp. 118–25; *Religious Lyrics*, ed. by Brown, no. 147, l. 50, p. 232.

[79] As expressed in the fifteenth-century poem *The Nightingale*: Lydgate, *Lydgate's Minor Poems*, ed. by Glauning, pp. 13–15; Dove, *The Perfect Age of Man's Life*, p. 52.

[80] Graubard, 'Preface'.

work and family, there were no single entry and exit points to adulthood, but several, allowing people to take on and be divested of their mature status at different ages. Rather than a chronological or legal category, medieval adulthood existed as a desire, as an ideology, and as an achievement. Midlife was the perfect age, partly because of its associations with Christ and its philosophical heritage, but mainly because it was the point that the young were ushered towards and the elderly tried to hold onto. It was the prime of life because it was when the body exhibited just the right amount of age: children had too little; the elderly had too much. Its ideological prominence and its normality are both underscored by the lack of references to it in medieval literature; there was simply no need to state the obvious.

The positive metaphors used to describe midlife saw it as the culmination of a series of acquisitions. For the writer Christine de Pizan, the age following youth was the one that had brought her to 'a certain degree of understanding'.[81] For others, it was the point where a person had gained the qualities of authority, strength, and responsibility and was in a position to fulfil social roles. This obviously has resonances with modern-day adulthood, and there are other similarities to note. The accomplishment of adulthood in both periods depended on full health and strength: physical and psychological impairment could strip away adult status. In this way medieval adulthood shared with modern adulthood a definition in opposition to childhood and its associations of dependency and weakness. It is also possible to uncover types of exclusion in the workplace in Medieval Europe that helped to define adulthood. A recognition of childhood weakness, the apprenticeship system, and fear of youthful emotions worked to delay the arrival of working adulthood. Nevertheless, these took into account personal capabilities, and medieval adulthood was never solely defined in terms of political and economic rights; the family context played a crucial role, especially for women. It must also be recognized that not all adults were considered the same in the Middle Ages: there were no universal citizenship rights. Gender and class differences would render a number of individuals lesser adults.

The changes that came with manhood and to a lesser extent womanhood included increased personal responsibility. Children and youths often had their behaviour excused on the grounds of their immaturity and rashness; the elderly were excused on the grounds of their frailty. But in midlife, an individual should be at full physical and rational strength; there were no excuses. These pressures could be a problem, and it has been shown that the medieval construction of midlife/adulthood combined the related but often competing discourses of

[81] Christine de Pizan, *The Vision*, trans. by McLeod and Willard, bk III.10, p. 104.

perfection and transition.[82] Adulthood had its own journey, and a person was not even halfway through life when he or she entered it. This transition period can appear to be one filled with bemoaning the follies of youth and fearing the onset of old age. This was not in the sense of a modern midlife crisis, criticized by Arnold Kruger as the disease of the affluent and self-absorbed, although it is interesting that it was medieval Europe's poets (whose work it was to look inwards) who publicly struggled with their midlife stage.[83] What is worth highlighting is that for medieval moral commentators self-reflection and interior journeys were considered an essential part in the battle against sin; it was certainly not self-indulgent. In spiritual terms, a person's journey was only beginning when youth passed; maturity meant proving one's strength by recognizing one's weaknesses. Life was short in plague- and war-torn Europe, and adulthood, particularly the early thirties, was the crucial time to assess the various routes one had travelled and prepare for the future.

[82] Dove, *The Perfect Age of Man's Life*, p. 1, where she seems to suggest that the two views are incompatible and of two culturally different times.

[83] Kruger, 'The Mid-Life Transition'.

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The Middle-Aged Meanderings of Margery Kempe: Medieval Women and Pilgrimage

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Throughout the Middle Ages pilgrimage offered those men and women who could afford it the opportunity to travel both at home and abroad. This essay considers the impact of gender and age upon when, and where, a woman might go on pilgrimage. As shall be seen, for those women who could afford it, their middle age represented a golden opportunity for peregrination locally and further afield.

Medieval pilgrimage might entail a short journey to a local shrine ('local' here meaning of localized 'spiritual' importance and also actual distance covered), such as travel to the shrine of Prior John Thwenge (d. 1379 and canonized in 1404) at the Augustinian Priory of Bridlington.[1] It might also entail longer trips to larger shrines of national or international significance such as Canterbury, Walsingham, St David's, Hailes Abbey, and Reading, or travel overseas to Compostela, Rome, and the Holy Land. Finally, medieval pilgrimage might be a combination of all three kinds of peregrination. To contextualize the achievement of a trip to the Holy Land from England during the Middle Ages, one should consider that this required a combination of travel on foot, horse, ship, and donkey. This was at a time when maps were not commonly owned, the condition of roads could not be guaranteed,[2] and few pilgrims possessed little direct knowledge of vernaculars other than English or had experience of foreign customs, climates, and diet.

[1] Goodman, *Margery Kempe and her World*, p. 127.

[2] For the significance of the condition and location of roads to the practice of pilgrimage in reference to Margery Kempe, see Allen, 'As the Crow Flies'.

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Although medieval pilgrim guides existed, such as the *Guide to Compostela*, these written works were not readily available to the public, lettered or otherwise.[3] For many, pilgrimage was literally a leap of faith that could be fraught with danger as Londoner Matilda de Bionie discovered. In 1330 Matilda suffered mishap on her way to visit the Holy Sepulchre, Santiago de Compostela, and Assisi. Matilda got as far as leaving Valence (north of Avignon on the Rhone) when the boat in which she was travelling capsized; she lost her money and could not complete her pilgrimage. She was lucky to survive as not everyone who set out with her returned — some of her fellow pilgrims were drowned.[4] Isolda Parewastel of Bridgewater endured equal if not greater danger. In 1366 she sought licence to found a chapel at Bridgewater in honour of the Virgin Mary, who had helped her escape miraculously from her capture by Saracens while she was in the Holy Land. During one of her daily visits to the Lord's sepulchre and other sacred places, Isolda describes how she had 'been stripped and placed head downwards on a rack and beaten' before she escaped.[5]

Margery Kempe (*c.* 1373–post-1439), daughter of John Brunham, a mayor of King's Lynn, wife of the burgess John Kempe, and Saint Bridget 'wannabe', has left us testimony in her *Boke*[6] of her journeys at home and abroad. Before proceeding with an investigation of her work, two qualifications are needed. The first is that although it is tempting to assert that Kempe's record is a testimony of her life experiences, we must remember that as autobiographical as the work may appear, it is a product of a 'self-conscious author, Kempe, who employed a character called Margery for as many and as varied purpose as Chaucer used Geoffrey throughout his poetry or as Langland used Will in *Piers Plowman*'.[7] While in the text there are clearly factual details, as we shall see, about travelling, pilgrimages, and the developing spirituality of Kempe, what the story of Margery enables is the life of one individual to be set and imagined within the context of social myths and realities. Margery's story about opportunities tells us much about late medieval urban practices and values, and with this observation the second qualification needs to be mooted. While the *Boke* reveals much to us about opportunities for travel and pilgrimage for middle-aged women, these details are, of course, arguably being mediated, by a male scribe, who supposedly records her

[3] Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome in the Middle Ages*, p. 13.

[4] *CPL*, ed. by Bliss and others, II, 318.

[5] *CPL*, ed. by Bliss and others, II, 512–13.

[6] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Windeatt.

[7] Staley, 'Introduction'.

oral recollections. While this creates parallels with female sacred biographies, the very fact that Kempe does not have the opportunity (or ability) to author the text shows us the conventions within which she had to work and, perhaps more significantly, within which women's activities and conduct were circumscribed, allowing, by contrast, the travel and spiritual questing opportunities for a middle-aged woman that are dramatized within the text to be read.[8]

Margery records her pilgrimages, dictated some years after the cessation of her travels, to York and Bridlington, the shrine of Thomas Becket at Canterbury, the Holy House of Our Lady at Walsingham, Hailes Abbey to see the phial of the Holy Blood of Christ, the Holy Land, Rome, Compostela (the burial place of Saint James), Middelburg, the Portiuncula Chapel at Assisi, the Holy Blood at Bad Wilsnak,[9] and Aachen, repository of the cloak and smock of the Virgin Mary.

As Margery journeyed physically to key Christian sites, she travelled simultaneously towards her ultimate metaphysical destination: mystical marriage to Christ and acceptance of her spirituality as orthodox by her peers, in particular by ecclesiastical authorities. Beginning her travels in her late thirties, the majority of her journeys occur in her forties with a reprise in her sixties.[10] Margery Kempe's narrative encourages questions about the opportunities for travel available in the Middle Ages to middle-aged women. This essay considers the influence of the intersections of age and gender upon Margery's travels: on when she chooses to travel, the experience of her actual journey, her choice of destination, and what it is that Margery takes away from her experience of pilgrimage. In theory, pilgrimage was a journey of grace or an act of penance that could be made by all. In practice, it was subject to ecclesiastical prescription and gender bias. Permission from the Church was supposed to have been sought since going on pilgrimage might still involve one in sin. As Peter Clarke notes, travel to the Holy Land and Compostela necessitated contact with Muslims (as Isolda Parewastel discov-

[8] On the subject of male scribes and the use some women writers made of the trope of the scribe, see Staley, *Margery Kempe's Dissenting Fictions*, chap. 1.

[9] See Zika, 'Hosts, Processions and Pilgrimages'.

[10] Margery's age can be calculated from her own testimony. She relates that it was miraculous that, at the age of 'abowtyn iii score yer of age', she could keep pace with the energetic, and presumably younger, men in her party travelling to Wilsnak (Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Windeatt, bk II, chap. 5, p. 402). In this same section of her *Boke* Margery mentions that on her return from Wilsnak 'þe lond wey sche myth not gon esyly, for þer was werr', the result of the ravaging of Neumark and Pomeralia (the South shore of the Baltic Sea) by the King of Poland, datable to the summer of 1433. See Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Meech and Allen, pp. 343–44 n. 232. Margery states that she is around sixty years of age on this trip, thus making her date of birth around 1373.

ered), and the Church forbade this to Christians; hence pilgrims required papal licences to visit such places.[11] Having been granted permission, the start of a pilgrim's journey was marked by the payment of all debts and might be followed by a ritual of blessing for the pilgrim and his/her insignia (the *baculus* or staff and *pera* or wallet).[12] It is possible that prior to her departure for the Holy Land, the blessing that Margery requested from her parish priest, Robert Spryngolde, was this ritual bestowed upon pilgrims.[13] Margery Kempe was certainly aware that she was required to pay her debts for she also requested that Spryngolde,

> sey for hir in þe pulpyt þat, yf any man er woman þat cleymyd any dette of hir husbond or of hir, thei schuld come and speke wyth hir er sche went, and sche, wyth the help of God, schulde makyn aseth to ech of hem that thei schuldyn heldyn hem content. And so sche dede.[14]
>
> [Say on her behalf from the pulpit that, if there were any man or woman who claimed any debt against her husband or her, they should come and speak with her before she went, and she, with God's help, would settle up with each of them so that they would hold themselves content. And so she did.]

As well as permission from the Church, the married pilgrim was required to obtain his or her spouse's consent to embark on a pilgrimage. Summoned by an unnamed priest before other clerics in the Chapter House of York Minster, Margery Kempe is asked for a 'lettyr of record' of her husband's assent for her to travel to the shrine of Saint William of York in the Minster. Margery tells the assembled clerics that John Kempe has indeed 'yaf me leve wyth hys owyn mowthe' and that this oral permission should suffice.[15]

Although men and women were equally able to go on pilgrimage and equally required to obtain both papal and spousal permission to embark on such travel, this equality of opportunity is deceptive. Susan Signe Morrison argues that 'women pilgrims need to be addressed as a separate category since they could experience pilgrimage differently'.[16] Even if a woman's husband granted her leave to travel, attitudes to female pilgrims and their motivation for travel were subject to gender constraint in ways that male pilgrims did not experience.

[11] Clarke, 'New Evidence of Noble and Gentry Piety', p. 35.

[12] For details of ritual blessings of pilgrims, see Rivard, 'Pro Iter Agentibus'.

[13] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Windeatt, bk 1, chap. 26, p. 150.

[14] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Windeatt, bk 1, chap. 26, p. 150.

[15] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Windeatt, bk 1, chap. 52, p. 246.

[16] Morrison, *Women Pilgrims in Late Medieval England*, p. 1.

As a practice, pilgrimage per se was subject to censure as is illustrated by the complaint, in 1407, of the Lollard William Thorpe:

> That whanne diverse men and wymmen wolen goen thus aftir her owne willis and fyndingis on pilgrimageyngis, thei wolen ordeynd biforehonde to have with hem both men and wymmen that kunnen wel synge rowtinge [roaring/bellowing] songis.[17]
>
> [That when various men and women will go thus on pilgrimage according to their own wills and false suppositions, they will arrange beforehand to have with them both men and women that can ably sing roaring songs.]

Criticism of the noise and unrestrained behaviour of pilgrims was readily coupled with medieval attitudes towards women in general, rendering female pilgrims easy targets for misogynist satire. Unlike travel that was driven by economic necessity, pilgrimage was usually undertaken voluntarily and might remove a woman a considerable distance (and for some time) from the male figures to whose authority she would normally defer, transporting her into the company of those who might be unknown to her family and friends. Pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Rome, and Compostela might do much for a woman's soul but little for her reputation.

Leigh Ann Craig has observed that female pilgrims 'earned a specialised kind of frustration and mistrust'.[18] A much copied and translated work will serve as illustration of the many medieval authors who condemned women in particular for making pilgrimages. The *De coniuge non ducenda* (*Against Marrying*), composed *c.* 1225–50 and still being translated in the fifteenth century when it was falsely attributed to Walter Map,[19] accuses wives of using pilgrimage as an excuse for sexual dalliance:

> Of ther nature they gretly hem delit
> With holy face fayned for the nones
> In seyntuaries ther frends to visite,
> More then for relikkes or any seyntis bones,
> Though they be closed under precious stones,
> To gete hem pardon like there olde usages,
> To kys no shrines but lusty yong images.[20]

[17] As quoted in Turner, 'The Carnivalesque', p. 388.

[18] Craig, "'Stronger than Men'", p. 154.

[19] Rigg, *A Glastonbury Miscellany of the Fifteenth Century*, p. 41.

[20] 'The Payne and Sorowe of Evyll Maryage', ed. by Wright, p. 298.

> [Because of their natures they greatly delight
> With holy faces feigned for the occasion
> To meet their friends in sanctuaries,
> Not because of relics or any saint's bones,
> Although they be enshrined under precious stones,
> To obtain pardons in accordance with their old practices,
> To kiss no shrines but rather lusty young 'images'.]

Criticism of women's sexual motivation for going on pilgrimage is certainly a presumption behind Chaucer's portrayal of the Wife of Bath. Alison of Bath's matrimonial monologue concerning her five previous marriages and optimistic cry of 'Welcome the sixte, whan that evere he shal',[21] suggests that her pilgrimage to Canterbury is little more than a hunting expedition for her next husband.

In contrast to their male counterparts, female pilgrims were assumed to be the frailer sex, unable to withstand sexual temptation that came their way on pilgrimage. But these assumptions are stereotypes arising largely from the misogamous literary tradition that flourished in Latin and the vernacular from the twelfth century onwards.[22] Historical documentation provides a corrective to such literature with examples of husbands who did trust their wives to undertake pilgrimage and to do so without them. In 1306 the wife of William de Grandison was granted indult for five years to visit 'three times a year the Cistercian monasteries of Dove and Flayleye in the diocese of Hereford, founded by her ancestors' to say Mass for the souls of their elder sons.[23] John Kempe clearly granted permission to Margery. It is not by chance that these two very different women were both readily given permission to travel by their spouses. In each instance the wife was accompanied: Lady de Grandison was travelling with six women; in Margery's case, she was escorted by a serving woman on her trip to the Holy Land, and by Patrick (a fellow pilgrim whom she had met at Santiago) on her trip to Leicester. As importantly, both women were in their middle years and it is to a consideration of the significance of this that we now turn.

'Middle age' was a concept familiar to the later Middle Ages. In a period with a penchant for schematization, the medieval theorization of the ageing of man (and indeed, schema usually describe men) was no exception. J. A. Burrow has examined how medieval Europe inherited from Antiquity a rich and varied tra-

[21] Chaucer, 'Wife of Bath's Prologue', l. 45, p. 105.

[22] For a detailed study, see Wilson and Makowski, *Wykked Wyves*.

[23] *CPL*, ed. by Bliss and others, II, 5.

dition of thought about the 'ages of man'.[24] More recently, this inheritance that survived well into the early modern period has been usefully summarized by Karl Zender, who acknowledges the variety of conceptualizations of ageing:

> The most frequent, tracing back to Hippocrates and famously expressed by Shakespeare in *As You Like It*, represents human life as consisting of seven ages; also prominent is the depiction, originating in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, of human life as divided into four ages corresponding to the four seasons of the year; and [...] other commentators — Aristotle, Marcus Varro, St. Augustine, Isidore of Seville, the Venerable Bede — argue for three or five or six divisions as well. All of these schema identify a stage, variously called *gravitas*, manhood, *maturitas*, *media aetas*, middle age, *perfecta aetas*, corresponding approximately to the concept of middle age.[25]

In the late medieval and early modern periods, as today, the characteristic of one's middle years was clearly a matter for debate. Burrow, drawing on Aristotle and Dante, argues that in the later Middle Ages this period in a man's life was understood as that in which his powers are at their height.[26] Zender, however, suggests that late medieval opinion regarded it as one of sadness; a commencement of the decline into the feebleness of old age. Zender explains how late medieval thought accounted for this perceived quality as an effect of the humour of melancholy:

> The Ovidian association of mature adulthood with autumn and hence with decline, for example, was extended in humoral theory to an association with the earth, with the planet Saturn, and with the melancholy humor; and in the iconographic tradition, figures representing mature adulthood were depicted as carrying an hourglass, signifying the passage of time, or as standing near a tree with ripe fruit about to fall, or as having one winged and one chained foot.[27]

Anneke Mulder-Bakker has argued most persuasively that women did not perceive the onset of middle age as the start of their decline but, rather, as a new and positive phase in their life cycle. Mulder-Bakker demonstrates how mature, urban, well-educated, secular women might play an important and independent

[24] Burrow, *The Ages of Man*.

[25] Zender, *Shakespeare, Midlife, and Generativity*, p. 2. See also Deborah Youngs's article in this volume. However middle age was more evanescent, if not absent, from the divisions of the earlier Middle Ages (sixth to early twelfth century), unless conceived as the first phase of *senectus*; see Table 1 in Isabelle Cochelin's introduction to this volume.

[26] Burrow, *The Ages of Man*, p. 8.

[27] Zender, *Shakespeare, Midlife, and Generativity*, p. 3.

role in the religious life of their home and city and how, at the age of forty, with the cessation of her childbearing a woman reached the 'age of discretion', a point in her life in which she might use her learning for the good of her family and community.[28]

The medieval period is replete with examples of middle-aged women who, having reached the age of discretion, ran homes and estates (the Paston women, prolific letter writers and estate managers in their forties[29]), wrote literature for a living (Christine de Pizan produced most of her work in her forties), and made use of the legal systems (Ellen de Rouclif challenged her husband's family in the ecclesiastical courts over her daughter's matrimonial dispute).[30] Rather than a period of decline, for late medieval women middle age could be a period of intense and productive activity.

Similarly, their middle age presented women with an ideal moment in their lives to undertake pilgrimage abroad. Unlike men, a woman's biological clock determined when, where, and why she undertook a pilgrimage. Diana Webb has argued that younger married women visited local shrines to seek help to aid fertility or for the well-being of an ailing child, and that a woman's opportunity for travel further afield would present itself only later in her life since 'the segment of female lifespan available for large-scale pilgrimage was relatively limited. If child-bearing and the care of small children were past, health and energy must still suffice'.[31] Sarah Hopper too sees two distinct moments in a woman's life cycle when she might more easily make a pilgrimage: before conception (a period that might span a woman's childhood, maidenhood, and early adulthood) but 'thereafter usually not until they had raised their families, become widowed or were more advanced in years'.[32] Chaucer lays just such a travel 'time frame' upon the Wife of Bath. Without the responsibility of a family to raise Alison visits Jerusalem just before the demise of husband number four (making her just forty) and is a widow in her forties when on pilgrimage to Canterbury. Hopper cites a real-life example of how parturition could delay pilgrimage. One Joanne de Pacy vowed with her husband to go on pilgrimage if she survived

[28] See Mulder-Bakker and Nip, *The Prime of their Lives*, and Mulder-Bakker, 'The Age of Discretion'.

[29] See *The Paston Women: Selected Letters*, ed. by Watt.

[30] See Niebrzydowski, 'From Bedroom to Courtroom'.

[31] Webb, *Medieval European Pilgrimage*, p. 96.

[32] Hopper, *Mothers, Mystics and Merrymakers*, p. 8. Leigh Ann Craig also notes the importance of widowhood as a period for long distance pilgrimage: Craig, "'Stronger than Men'", p. 162.

the birth of her child. Later her husband requested that this vow be commuted as thereafter she was normally pregnant every year and so physically unable to make the journey.[33]

The freedom from childbearing and its concomitant responsibilities during middle age, then, presented women with the ideal opportunity to undertake long-distance travel with the proviso, as cautioned by Webb, that 'health and energy must still suffice'. Some women may well have felt the physical (and emotional) burden of their childrearing to weigh more heavily on them than did others. In 1343 Elizabeth de Burgh, countess of Clare, sought dispensation to choose a confessor to transmute the vow that she made when married to visit the Holy Land and Santiago de Compostela to some other works of piety 'which, being forty, she cannot hope to fulfil'.[34] Born in 1295, Elizabeth had three children: William, the last earl of Ulster (b. 1312), Isabel de Verdun (b. 1317) and Elizabeth (b. 1318). By her forties, Elizabeth had outlived three husbands (John de Burgh, Theobald de Verdun, and Roger Damory). She was widowed in 1322 and remained so until her death, at sixty-five, in 1360. The success of Elizabeth's petition assumes as a given that frailty accompanies middle age. Her actions throughout her forties and beyond, however, speak of a powerful, healthy woman who changed her mind about a promised pilgrimage abroad because even better opportunities for piety and patronage at home had presented themselves. In 1336 Elizabeth had refounded University Hall (now Clare College in Cambridge), and she maintained an ongoing and active interest in the institution throughout her middle age, providing it with money, vessels, and books and, in 1359, writing the statutes of what had become known as Clare Hall.[35] Judith C. Ward notes that Elizabeth, who had taken a vow of chastity by 1343, frequently went on local pilgrimage to Canterbury, Walsingham, and Bromholm, and in 1347 had founded a house of Franciscan friars at Walsingham.[36] It is interesting to note that, although Elizabeth rejects the possibility of pilgrimage abroad during her middle age, this period in her life when her childbearing and matrimonial commitments have ceased presents her the opportunity for a number of pilgrimages at home.

Elizabeth de Burgh is evidence of the good health and energy in mind and body enjoyed by many medieval middle-aged women. While on her travels Margery remains well; it is only on her return to England that she suffers from

[33] Hopper, *Mothers, Mystics and Merrymakers*, p. 9.

[34] *CPL*, ed. by Bliss and others, III, 22–23.

[35] See Underhill, *For her Good Estate*.

[36] See Ward, 'Clare, Elizabeth de'.

a 'flyx' (dysentery)[37] and a period of ill health (between 1418 and 1428, during her late forties and early fifties). It seems probable that she contracted dysentery 'afftyrward' she had returned to Lynn from a long spell in which she and her husband, John, had lived in London.[38] The accompanying head and back pain that Margery experienced may not have been dysentery at all but rather the symptoms of chronic appendicitis or an inflamed gall bladder,[39] and cannot be considered the result of her overseas travels, nor indeed, age-related: they were sheer bad luck and could have occurred at any point in her life. Margery returned to health, enabling her to make a final trip to Bad Wilsnak. Then sixty, Margery complains about how hard she is finding walking, being 'so wery and so ovyrcomyn wyth labowr'[40] on the way back to Calais and yet manages to keep up with men much younger than herself. Unlike her companions, Margery does not suffer from seasickness on the crossing back to Dover. As evinced by this veteran traveller, physical debilitation was not necessarily an accompaniment of advancing years. Margery Kempe's journeys in her very late thirties and forties fit the pattern of female pilgrimage articulated by Webb: Margery's travel has to wait until her middle age and a change in her life's responsibilities that is conducive to extended periods away from home and dependants.

Tracing the haphazard chronology of Margery's life gleaned from her *Boke*, Barry Windeatt suggests that Margery married John Kempe at the age of about twenty 'or sumdele mor',[41] bore the first of fourteen children soon after, and then suffered eight months of subsequent postpartum illness. Her twenties are taken up with childbirth and the various businesses of housewifery, brewing, and milling, each of which keep her located in her home town of Bishop's (now King's) Lynn in Norfolk. Margery's travels, as reconstructed from her *Boke*, fall into distinct phases:

Margery's twenties were spent in and around King's Lynn working as a housewife, mother, brewer, and miller. As described in her *Boke*, this decade in her life is characterized by a sense of lack of direction, of not knowing where she was going in life yet being conscious that she is trapped in a place/way of being that is not her final destination. Her sense of wifedom is marred by her traumatic experience of childbirth followed by a priest's disapproval of what she believes is her

[37] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Windeatt, bk I, chap. 56, p. 271.

[38] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Windeatt, bk I, chap. 55, p. 270.

[39] Atkinson, *Mystic and Pilgrim*, p. 63.

[40] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Windeatt, bk II, chap. 7, p. 412.

[41] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Windeatt, bk I, chap. 1, p. 52.

Table 3. Margery Kempe's Life

c. 1373:	Margery Brunham born
In her twenties ('or somewhat more')	
c. 1393:	Marries John Kempe
	Childbearing/Housewifery
	Brewing business
	Milling business
In her thirties	
c. 1411:	Commanded by Christ to go to Rome, Jerusalem, and Santiago
1413:	Visits Julian of Norwich
	June – York and Bridlington
	Canterbury
	Leaves Lynn for Holy Land (after death of her father)
	Winter in Venice
In her forties	
1414:	Spring – sails from Venice to Holy Land
	Mount Calvary (first of her 'cries')
	1 August – chapel of the Portiuncula
	7 October – chapel of St Bridget in Rome
	9 November – her mystical marriage to Christ in Apostles' Church in Rome
1415:	After Easter leaves Rome
	12–17 May – Middelburg
	21 May – returns to Norwich
1417:	Embarks at Bristol for Santiago
	August–September; Trial and detention in Leicester
	7 September – Trial in York, Cawood, and Beverley
	London
1418:	Returns to Lynn
1418–28:	Years of ill heath
In her fifties/sixties?	
1433:	Embarks at Ipswich
	10–13 April; Easter in Norway
	April–May; Danzig; describes herself as 'about sixty years of age'
	10–24 July; Exhibition of the Four Holy relics at Aachen
1434:	Arrives at Syon Abbey

deathbed attempt to confess some earlier sin, experiences that push Margery into some form of postpartum psychosis.[42] Her sense of self as a businesswoman is marred by the failures of her brewing and milling enterprises. Her sense of self as a bourgeois woman, complete with the outward trappings of this social class — the dramatic headdresses and slashed sleeves of expensive costume[43] — is undercut by the accusations of pride thrown at her by her husband and neighbours. As her twenties draw to a close, Margery begins to have the visions and conversations with Christ that make her desire to leave off her fleshly union with her husband and embrace a spiritual one with Christ, but her family and spousal commitments make following this path nigh on impossible. At this point in her life, her travel is confined to the locality of Lynn and what might be called an 'armchair voyage' of the mind — Margery has visions of assisting at the births of the Virgin Mary, John the Baptist and Christ, followed by the Adoration of the Magi and the Flight into Egypt.[44] Margery knows the names of the biblical locations — Bethlehem and Egypt — but they are names, nothing more. It is plausible that Margery visualizes these faraway locations and the events that occurred there in the manner in which they were depicted in the stained glass windows, wall paintings, and rood screens of the East Anglian locality in which she lived. Margery's own parish church, St Margaret's in Lynn, had a chapel devoted to the Virgin Mary known as the Gysine (from 'gesine' or 'childbirth'), possibly containing a permanent crib scene, and also an image of Saint John the Baptist.[45] Margery's 'armchair voyage' recalls that encouraged in two late fifteenth-century works on pilgrimage. The Latin text that survives uniquely in Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 212, produced in Germany probably for a Franciscan, contains textual and pictorial content evoking Holy Sites in a manner similar to the *Die Sionpilger*, the Swabian text by Felix Fabri recalling his own pilgrimage to the Holy Land for sisters enclosed in several women's convents in south-west Germany.[46] Kathryn M. Rudy's description of the purpose of Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 212 applies equally well to Fabri's *Die Sionpilger* since both works create 'an entirely vicarious livresque experience by presenting the reader with folios [...] which constitute visually coherent

[42] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Windeatt, bk 1, chap. 1, pp. 52–56.

[43] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Windeatt, bk 1, chap. 2, p. 57.

[44] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Windeatt, bk 1, chap. 6, pp. 75–78 and chap. 7, pp. 78–79.

[45] Goodman, *Margery Kempe and her World*, p. 80. Elizabeth James has suggested that St Margaret's possessed a permanent crib scene: James, 'The St. Margaret's of Margery Kempe'.

[46] For a detailed analysis of Paris, Bibl. de l'Arsenal, MS 212, see Rudy, 'A Guide to Mental Pilgrimage'. For *Die Sionpilger*, see Beebe, 'Reading Mental Pilgrimage in Context'.

units and draw the reader through a spiritual geography'.[47] In the same manner, Margery was inspired to evoke the Holy Land through her pictorial encounters with it during her visits to her local parish church.

While the Paris manuscript and *Die Sionpilger* concern themselves with the indulgences to be gained by their readers from 'visits' to each of the Holy locations, when she places herself at the heart of the biblical events that she describes, Margery normalizes the 'foreign' to the familiar for a housewife and mother from late medieval East Anglia, perceiving herself to gather the accoutrements for a lying-in: spiced wine, strips of linen for swaddling bands for the baby, and linen for Mary's childbed.[48] Margery's focus is not that of indulgences but in articulating a gendered experience that reinforces the validity of her conversations with Christ, her aspiration to be accepted as a Bride of Christ, and acceptance by the women closest to him: his mother Mary and grandmother Saint Anne.[49]

Her voyage of (self-)discovery commences in her late thirties. In this decade of her life, in which Margery describes herself as 'beryng chylder and sche was newly delyveryd of a child',[50] her travels are confined to England. Margery states that they are made with her husband's consent and company 'Sche reqwired hir husband to graw[n]tyn hir leve, and he, fully trosting it was the wyl of God, sone consentyng, thei went togedyr to swech place as sche was mevyd [moved]'.[51] Perceiving herself postpartum as 'bothe feynt and feble',[52] Margery's travels begin modestly with a trip to meet the recluse, known as Dame Julian, attached to Saint Julian's Conisford in Norwich (a distance of forty-one miles), while her furthest trips take her to Yorkshire (York and Bridlington; 278 and 270 miles round trip, respectively, from her home town of Lynn).[53] The possibility of long-distance travel is

[47] Rudy, 'A Guide to Mental Pilgrimage', p. 500.

[48] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Windeatt, bk I, chap. 6, p. 77.

[49] Spiritual marriage to the Godhead or becoming a bride of Christ was a familiar concept in the later Middle Ages. It is a key aspect of the anonymous, late fourteenth-century poem *Pearl*, in which a deceased three-year-old appears as a young woman in a dream vision to her grieving father and explains to him that he should take consolation that Christ 'Me ches to hys make' (XIII, l. 757): *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. by Anderson, p. 29. Margery's spiritual heroine, Saint Bridget of Sweden, also experienced mystical marriage to Christ as did Margery herself, when 'weddyd to my Godhede' in the Apostles Church in Rome (Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Windeatt, bk I, chap. 35, pp. 189–90).

[50] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Windeatt, bk I, chap. 17, p. 113.

[51] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Windeatt, bk I, chap. 10, p. 85.

[52] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Windeatt, bk I, chap. 17, p. 113.

[53] Julian of Norwich (1342–*c.* 1416), anchoress and mystic, wrote the *Shewings* (the modern title of which is the *Revelations of Divine Love*) which she composed in both a short and a

deferred. In around 1411 when Christ commanded her to go to Rome, Jerusalem, and Compostela, he suggested that this be 'in hir mend, ii yer er than sche went'.[54]

It is in her forties that Margery begins a four- or five-year period of extraordinary and intensive travel overseas, beginning with the trip to the Holy Land that she could only promise Christ to make during her early thirties. Only in her forties does she actually make trips to Rome, Assisi, Middelburg (The Netherlands), the Holy Land, and Santiago de Compostela. The reaction of many readers to the list of places that Margery visits at this time is effectively summarized by Rosalynn Voaden when she comments,

> The thought of a forty-year-old woman setting off in 1413 on an arduous journey of a thousand miles through a war-torn Europe, over the Alps and across the Mediterranean to the Holy Land, a journey that would take months and largely be undertaken on foot or by wagon, compels our amazement.[55]

During this decade of her life Margery is free to travel abroad, having concluded her childbearing and related responsibilities. The moment of release from her former life is clearly signalled in her *Boke* by the argument that Margery recalls between herself and John on the road between York and Bridlington in June 1413. Her husband agrees to stop demanding that she has sex with him (thus releasing Margery from the conjugal debt) in return for her payment of his debts before she leaves for Jerusalem.[56]

On her return from Compostela, and after a period of some thirteen years in which she remains in Lynn, in her sixties Margery has a second period of pilgrimage. Again, her freedom to travel great distances comes about through the cessation of the familial responsibilities that are the lot of many middle-aged women:

long version. This work contains her reflections on a series of sixteen visions of the crucified Christ, which she received in 1373 as she lay apparently dying, when, she relates, she was thirty and a half years old. In 1413 Margery Kempe visited her because 'the ankres was expert in swech thyngys and good cownsel cowd yevyn' (Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Windeatt, bk 1, chap. 18, p. 120). Margery visited York Minster 'on pilgrimage to offyr her at Seynt William' (ibid., bk 1, chap. 51, p. 246). This was the tomb of William Fitzherbert, archbishop of York (d. 1154), canonized in 1227, whose stone coffin can still be seen in the minster. Margery also visited the tomb of John Thwenge, prior of the Augustinian priory of Bridlington, who was canonized on 24 September 1401 by Pope Boniface IX and henceforth became known as Saint John of Bridlington. The body of the saint was removed to a shrine at the back of the high altar, which became a place of pilgrimage. See Page, 'Houses of Austin Canons'.

[54] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Windeatt, bk 1, chap. 15, p. 102.

[55] Voaden, 'Travels with Margery', pp. 182–83.

[56] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Windeatt, bk 1, chap. 11, pp. 88–90.

being the primary carer of family members who are no longer capable of caring for themselves, in Margery's case a sick, adult son and a husband who, in his sixties, fell downstairs and became senile from his head injuries. On their deaths,[57] Margery resumes her travels, once again starting locally with a trip to Walsingham (a forty-eight mile round trip), and then to the coast of Norway, concluding in a final and unplanned pilgrimage to Germany (Danzig/Gdansk, Bad Wilsnak, and Aachen) and on her return, a visit to Syon Abbey (in Isleworth, London, a 236 mile round trip from Lynn). Margery's life was, as described by Kim Phillips, 'highly active and adventurous'.[58]

Margery's age affected not only when she could travel and the length of these journeys; it impacted also on her choice of destinations, her reception when she arrived, and what Margery took away from her experience of travel. When Margery does begin to travel in her late thirties and forties, her choice of destination is intimately bound up with the forging and validating of the identity that she seeks for herself — acceptance as a bride of Christ who receives direct communication with the Son of God, although she is a married (and was once sexually active), middle-aged woman. Margery does not seek out shrines to pray for fertility (as a younger wife might) nor those to aid the recovery of a sick child or spouse (it is noteworthy that she never does so for either her ailing son or her husband in the latter part of her life).

In her late thirties Margery travels to York, Bridlington, and Canterbury, seeking the approval of clerics of her desire for a chaste marriage and validation of her conversations with Christ. More than once Margery bravely faces accusations of Lollardy and threats of burning as she travels in search of this validation. Once she has achieved her chaste marriage, Margery travels much further afield, enduring the hardship of travel abroad: of amassing funds with which to travel, being criticized and cast aside by her fellow pilgrims who do not understand her weeping as she is moved in contemplation of Christ's suffering, enduring long distances in the heat, rough sea crossings, the loss of her money, and being cast upon the mercy of strangers along the way. Chapters twenty-seven to thirty of her *Boke* deal with her thirteen-week stay in Venice and her visit to the Holy Land: the Holy Sepulchre, Calvary, Bethlehem, the River Jordan, and Bethany. On seeing the places that she could only visit in her imagination in her twenties, Margery writes an account that disappoints the modern reader when considered as travel writing. Her description of Bethlehem is illustrative of the kind of information that she provides:

[57] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Windeatt, bk II, chap. 2, p. 390.

[58] Phillips, 'Margery Kempe and the Ages of Women', p. 19.

> Aftyrward sche rood on an asse to Bedlem, and whan sche cam to the tempyl and to the crybbe wher owyr Lord was born, sche had gret devocyon, moch speech, and dalyawns in hyr sowle, an hy gostly comfort wyth mech wepyng and sobbyng, so that hir felaws wold not latyn hir etyn in her company. And therfor sche ete hir mete be hirselfe alone.[59]
>
> [Afterwards she rode on an ass to Bethlehem, and when she came to the church and to the crib where our Lord was born, she had great devotion, much conversing in her soul, and high spiritual comfort, with much weeping and sobbing, so that her fellow pilgrims would not allow her to eat in their company. And therefore she ate her meals alone by herself.]

Margery is not interested in providing the encyclopaedic detail of foreign climes, customs, flora, and fauna that is routinely found, for example, in John Mandeville's (mostly imagined) *Travels*. A mixture of pilgrimage routes, biblical narrative, romance, ethnography, natural history, lapidary, and bestiary, the purpose of Mandeville's work is to describe the foreign in great detail for those who cannot get there, and this is seen in his description of the sights of the Holy Land. Mandeville describes, for example, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in some detail:

> And there is a full fair church, all round, and open above, and covered with lead; and on the west side is a fair tower and high for bells, strongly made. And in the midst of the church is a tabernacle, as it were a little house, made with a low little door, and that tabernacle is made in manner of half a compass, right curiously and richly made of gold and azure and other rich colours full nobly made. And in the right side of that tabernacle is the sepulchre of our Lord; and the tabernacle is eight foot long, and five foot wide, and eleven foot in height. And it is not long sith the sepulchre was all open, that men might kiss it and touch it; but for pilgrims that came thither pained them to break the stone in pieces or in powder, therefore the soldan hath do make a wall about the sepulchre that no man may touch it: but in the left side of the wall of the tabernacle is, well the height of a man, a great stone to the quantity of a man's head, that was of the holy sepulchre; and that stone kiss the pilgrims that come thither.[60]

Whereas Kempe's account simply states:

> Whan this creatur with hir felawshep cam to the grave wher owyr Lord was beriid, anon sche entryd that holy place, sche fel down with hir candel in hir hand, as

[59] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Windeatt, bk 1, chap. 29, p. 168.

[60] From Mandeville, 'Of the Pilgrimages in Jerusalem'.

> sche schuld a deyd for sorwe. And sythen sche ros up ageyn with gret wepyng and sobbyng, as thow sche had seyn owyr Lord beriid even befor hir.[61]
>
> [When this creature with her companions came to the grave where our Lord was buried, then, as she entered that holy place, she fell down with her candle in her hand, as if she would have died for sorrow. And later she rose up again with great weeping and sobbing, as though she had seen our Lord buried right in front of her.]

Margery neither experiences nor provides any of the 'luridity and sensational extravagance' that Geraldine Heng perceives as narrative pleasure provided by travel romances.[62] Unlike Mandeville, Kempe is not so influenced by romance but rather the recording of her own steps towards sanctity as featured in hagiography. Hence she provides evidence only of her reactions to places, rather than a description of the place itself, because it is the *going* and her *spiritual response* to being there rather than the *seeing* that matters. For Kempe visiting the Holy Land, Rome, Assisi, Santiago de Compostela, Gdansk, Bad Wilsnak, Aachen, and Syon matters not only because they represent some of the key sites of pilgrimage in the medieval Christian world but also, and as importantly, because of those who went there before Margery. Collectively, these locations represent a themed series of travels. Margery follows, literally, in the footsteps of the married mothers who, in their middle age, travelled to and wept and cried before the very sacred sites that Margery visits, and who became recognized as saints.[63] Known to Margery through the reading of the clerics in her circle, these women's lives validated Margery's own far better than any male authority.

In visiting Santiago, Rome, the Holy Land, and Aachen Margery replicates the journey of her special heroine, Saint Bridget of Sweden (1303–73) who was widowed at forty, having visions in the same locale that Bridget received hers and undergoing the same mystical marriage to Christ. It is perhaps no chance matter that a trip to Syon, a royal foundation particular to Saint Bridget, is credited by Margery as her final pilgrimage, emphasizing Margery's spiritual connection with this saint. In her trip to the Portiuncula at Assisi Margery visits the site of the vision received by the Blessed Angela of Foligno (*c.* 1249–1309), a worldly mother who, at the age of forty, underwent a conversion to a spiritual life. Her trip to Danzig/Gdansk, Bad Wilsnak, and Aachen, the result of a divinely inspired,

[61] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Windeatt, bk 1, chap. 29, p. 168.

[62] Heng, *Empire of Magic*, p. 246.

[63] This point has been made repeatedly, for example, by Watt, 'Faith in the Landscape', and Allen, 'As the Crow Flies', p. 29.

apparently spur-of-the-moment decision to accompany her widowed daughter-in-law back to Prussia,[64] places her in the locality of Dorothea of Mantau (1347–94), yet another married woman, widowed at forty-three, who became a recluse, went on pilgrimage to Aachen, and also became recognized as a holy woman despite having been married.

Margery's *Boke* is notoriously difficult to navigate. She recalls aspects of her life in a non-linear fashion and provides varying levels of detail about the events that appear;[65] at the same time, she was aware of the life cycle. She acknowledges that she was a 'sinful caytyf [wretch] many yerys [...] in wyl and in purpose'.[66] She recalls in her sixties when she was first married at 'xx yer of age or sumdele mor',[67] and the feelings, long past, that she had felt for her husband, John, in her youth 'many delectably thowyts, fleschly lustys, and inordinate lovys to hys persone'.[68] Yet Margery neither perceives herself as middle- or old-aged nor is inhibited due to her passing years. As stated earlier, her middle age and the cessation of her duties as wife and mother furnish her with the opportunity for pilgrimage abroad. Even in her sixties on the trip to Wilsnak and Aachen, Margery does not perceive herself as having become old — she does indeed mention that she is sixty, and that she is tired on the return trip to Calais, yet it seems that Margery mentions this to emphasize how she keeps pace with the younger men in the party and then has the energy to care for those with seasickness on the crossing to Dover.[69]

Margery Kempe's *Boke* is testimony to the journey towards spirituality travelled by a bourgeois woman from medieval East Anglia. The most important travels occurred during Margery's middle age because this was the moment in her life that the cessation of her spousal and maternal responsibilities permitted her the time to do so. Having reached the end of this essay, perhaps a case should be made for its retitling. Margery's narrative is not an account of 'middle-aged meanderings' but rather one of planned progress in the prime of her life.

[64] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Windeatt, bk II, chaps 2–7, pp. 396–412.

[65] Margery does not recall her life story in a chronological fashion, but the lack of causal structure is not surprising. Her contemporary, Julian of Norwich, also disrupts chronology in her recall of her visions. The writings of the mystics seem more concerned with locating temporal secular events in relation to biblical history (specifically in relation to Christ's life) than they are with chronological life histories.

[66] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Windeatt, preface, p. 41.

[67] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Windeatt, bk I, chap. 1, p. 52.

[68] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Windeatt, bk I, chap. 76, p. 332.

[69] Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Windeatt, bk II, chap. 7, p. 412.

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'Byð se ealda man ceald and snoflig': Stereotypes and Subversions of the Last Stages of the Life Cycle in Old English Texts and Anglo-Saxon Contexts

Philippa Semper

Byð se ealda man ceald and snoflig': the old man is cold and snuffly.[1] Thus Byrhtferth, writing his *Manual* or *Enchiridion* on the computus in the early eleventh century at Ramsey Abbey, describes the fourth and final age of man.[2] Any examination of the nature and content of the constructs of later life in an Anglo-Saxon context must surely result in an encounter with this schematized stereotype sooner rather than later, and so persuasive are its descriptions that its stylized nature and the complex intertexts with which it must be understood are sometimes forgotten. In fact, Byrhtferth presents the *only* remaining discussion of the four ages in Old English and provides a unique version of that scheme in the process.[3] This instance of the life cycle, therefore, should be read as a single expression of, rather than a controlling mechanism for, Anglo-Saxon ideas about the nature of age and ageing.

Such ideas are in urgent need of re-examination. Scholarly studies of old age have often avoided discussion of the Anglo-Saxon period, moving instead from

[1] Byrhtferth, *Enchiridion*, ed. by Baker and Lapidge, p. 12.

[2] Strictly speaking, the computus deals with the reckoning of the calendar for the calculation of the moveable feasts, most importantly Easter. Texts like Byrthferth's, however, also cover a wide range of other material related to time and the natural world.

[3] On the uniqueness of Byrhtferth's definition of the life cycle at the time he wrote, see also Cochelin's introduction to this volume.

Medieval Life Cycles: Continuity and Change, ed. by Isabelle Cochelin and Karen Smyth
INTERNATIONAL MEDIEVAL RESEARCH 18 BREPOLS PUBLISHERS (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013)
pp. 287–318 10.1484/M.IMR-EB.1.100789

a study of antiquity to one of the high and later Middle Ages.[4] Recent attempts to address the issue, such as *Old Age in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, acknowledge this — the subtitle of this collection is *Interdisciplinary Approaches to a Neglected Issue* — but treat a limited range of material: the single essay on Old English texts revisits the well-trodden ground of the ageing of Hrothgar and its implications for his kingship.[5] It seems we have yet to move on from the extremely useful (but by no means conclusive) suggestions made as a result of Amos's examination of 'Old English Words for *Old*' in 1990.[6] The present study attempts to both analyse and contextualize such suggestions, looking beyond the pervasive but opposing and stereotypical images of the wise old king and the snuffly old man.[7] There is more yet to be learnt about the latter stages of life as represented in the texts of this period. Byrhtferth's location of old age in relation to other aspects of the natural world is a good place to begin.

The description of the life cycle which Byrhtferth gives in the *Enchiridion* has a long ancestry.[8] Byrhtferth had access to the general theory of the four elements and their qualities through such late classical texts as Macrobius, *Commentarium in somnium Scipionis* and Boethius, *De consolatione philosophiae* which he certainly knew, and of course through early medieval encyclopaedic writings, most notably those by Isidore of Seville.[9] For this passage in particular, Byrhtferth appears to be following a commentary on Boethius by Remigius, and Bede's *De temporum ratione*, although he was probably also familiar with microcosmic/macrocosmic correspondences from the discussion and diagrams in Isidore's *De natura rerum*.[10]

[4] For example, Johnson and Thane, *Old Age from Antiquity to Post-Modernity*, and Thane, *Old Age in English History*. Georges Minois treats the 'early Middle Ages' as a single entity and focuses on the development of a single area — 'the old man as a symbol in Christian literature' — in Minois, *History of Old Age*. Shahar, *Growing Old in the Middle Ages* concentrates its close analysis on texts from the high and later Middle Ages.

[5] Rothauser, 'Winter in Heorot'.

[6] Amos, 'Old English Words for *Old*'.

[7] This discussion is limited to the study of old men for reasons of space; for a summary of recent studies of 'old women in the early Middle Ages', see Garver, 'Old Age and Women', p. 123 n. 11.

[8] For detailed studies of the life cycle, see Cochelin's introduction to this volume; Burrow, *The Ages of Man*; Sears, *The Ages of Man*.

[9] See Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature*, p. 41.

[10] For a discussion of sources, see Baker and Lapidge in Byrhtferth, *Enchiridion*, ed. by Baker and Lapidge, p. 255.

Byrhtferth himself seems to have been an enthusiast when it came to diagrams and includes the ages of man in two of his diagrammatic creations which remain extant, and probably a third which has not survived in full. The two extant diagrams in the *Enchiridion* are both designed to show the various 'sets of four' or quadripartite harmony within the natural world, suitably assumed to the power of God; hence, the four ages of man appear variously combined with the four seasons, elements, qualities, solstices and equinoxes, directions, cardinal virtues, and letters in the names ADAM, DEUS, and ROOD, not to mention the related sets of twelve which can be divided into four: the months and signs of the zodiac.[11] The other, missing diagram precedes these others, occurring earlier in the *Enchiridion* and immediately following Byrhtferth's description of the ages. Only a torn corner remains, yet it is clear that the diagram took up the full page and was surrounded by a frame which contained the twelve winds. Since the passage preceding it, which it was explicitly stated to illustrate, mentioned the winds, seasons, ages, qualities, humours, and elements, it is reasonable to expect that all these were included in the diagram. A possible reconstruction is provided in the latest edition of the text, although this suggestion is not without its problems.[12]

However, what these diagrams and their accompanying discussion show very clearly is that Byrhtferth saw the ages as being inextricably connected to the natural cycles of time and structures of nature; he saw the integral design of quadripartite harmony as validating this scheme and prioritizing it above other possible divisions of the 'ages of man' he could have known — notably the division into ten blocks of seven years he might have found in Macrobius, or the six-age scheme in Isidore's *Etymologiae* which was also discussed by Bede.[13] Evidently, what interested Byrhtferth was the system of natural correspondences whereby man could map his own microcosmic life against that of the universe from birth to death. In an Anglo-Saxon environment this is perhaps not surprising; as Amos points out, 'the word *world* [...] is composed of *wer* "man" plus *eald* "time, age, life" — the *wer-eald*, or *weorold*, as it was more often spelled, is literally "the time of man"'.[14] Nonetheless, it marks out a defining interest in Byrhtferth's approach which can be perceived in other aspects of Old English texts and culture as well.

[11] For a detailed, illustrated discussion of these diagrams, see Semper, 'Doctrine and Diagrams'.

[12] Baker and Lapidge's reconstruction can be found in Byrhtferth, *Enchiridion*, ed. by Baker and Lapidge, p. 15. The problems of reconstruction will be discussed in a book I am currently writing.

[13] For Macrobius, see bk I, chap. 6. 62, 70–75 in Macrobius, *Commentary on 'The Dream of Scipio'*, trans. by Stahl, pp. 112–15. On Isidore, see Burrow, *The Ages of Man*, pp. 82–83. For Bede's discussion, see Bede, *The Reckoning of Time*, trans. by Wallis, pp. 157–58.

[14] Amos, 'Old English Words for *Old*', pp. 95–96.

Further evidence for this interest comes from a diagram found on folio 7^{v} of the eleventh-century computistical collection in Oxford, St John's College, MS 17, which is attributed by its inscription to Byrhtferth himself.[15] Among its many correspondences based upon sets of four, it includes roundels pairing the seasons with the ages of man, and it is here that we find Byrhtferth's boundaries for each age: childhood (paired with spring) lasts up to the age of fourteen, adolescence (summer) to twenty-eight, maturity (autumn) to forty-eight, and old age (winter) spans the years between forty-eight and seventy or eighty, when death occurs. Given the emphasis on numerical correspondences, we might expect there to be regularity in the ages, and certainly the two sets of fourteen years and the stages reached in them seem to have some correspondence with Macrobius's sets of seven in which 'by the fourteenth year the child reaches the age of puberty' and 'after four times seven years the body ceases to grow broader'. For Macrobius, however, the forty-ninth year (seven sets of seven) is to be considered 'perfect', whereas by Byrhtferth's reckoning it is already a year into old age![16] As Isabelle Cochelin's work shows, however, the divisions of the ages given here are not at all unusual for the early and central Middle Ages; as she points out, what does deserve attention is Byrhtferth's unusual association in his *Enchiridion* of *iuvenes* with 'maturity' rather than 'young adulthood', consequently emphasizing the genuine 'oldness' of the entire final extended period of old age.[17] Byrhtferth's choice of boundaries and terms, then, shows an emphatic irregularity, with the time allotted to old age potentially longer than any other.

The information given on old age in the *Enchiridion* varies according to the audience at whom it is aimed. Byrhtferth's discussion of quadripartite harmonies in Latin is supposedly directed to learned monks, for whom such information should be commonplace. It is thus brusque on the subject of old age, noting merely that 'hiems et senectus deficiuntur' (winter and old age decline).[18] It is

[15] For a complete digital facsimile of this manuscript, see *The Calendar and the Cloister*. Another copy, dating from the twelfth century, may be found in BL, MS Harley 3667 on fol. 8^{r}; here, however, it is not attributed to Byrhtferth but merely labelled *Hec figura composita est de concordia mensium atque elementorum*. The Harley scribe has also become somewhat confused: having misplaced some labels, he has given up entirely on others.

[16] Macrobius, *Commentary on 'The Dream of Scipio'*, trans. by Stahl, pp. 114–15. Macrobius does admit that 'decline does set in' between the years of forty-two and forty-nine, 'but imperceptibly, so that it does not betray the change by evidence of weakness' (p. 115).

[17] See Cochelin's introduction to this volume. I am also grateful to Isabelle Cochelin for personal correspondence on this point.

[18] Byrhtferth, *Enchiridion*, ed. by Baker and Lapidge, pp. 10–11. This is, of course, a shortened version of the medical discourse surrounding old age in relation to the quadripartite

only in Byrhtferth's Old English translation, provided for the benefit of more rustic 'clerks' that the homely details are added. It is still the case that 'winter and yld ateoriað', but here also we learn of the old man's snuffles; further, Byrhtferth adds that 'flegmata (þæt byð hraca oððe geposu) deriað þam ealdan and þam unhalan' (phlegm — which is mucus or a head-cold — harms the old and the infirm).[19] The excess of cold and wet is harmful to the elderly because they are already cold and wet by nature and, as Bede points out, 'phlegmatic humours produce people who are slow, sleepy and forgetful'.[20] Their qualities set them up in opposition to the hot, dry qualities of summer and adolescence.

This portrayal of the state of old age is the result of a mixed medical and philosophical discourse inherited from antiquity. Despite its origins, it is read through the prism of Christianity, and the ways in which it can be played out in Old English texts are inevitably affected by and mixed with Christian views on the relationships between God, man, and the created world. Byrhtferth's appropriation is produced from a combination of display and pedagogy — the need to establish his own credentials as a teacher in the style of Bede, as well as the need to educate his reluctant pupils. Hence the Latin text emphasizes his place in the classical tradition through his inheritance of knowledge from 'great writers', while the Old English text utilizes the most obvious and extreme symptoms of a 'cold and wet' person, perhaps to invoke a more vivid image as an aid to memory.[21] Overall, this discourse works through a series of binary oppositions and is predicated on a series of correspondences that construct a harmonized universe, designed and maintained by God. The structure of these correspondences ensures that old age represents a state of deterioration and decay, unavoidably at variance with the growth and development of the young. Yet the disjunction between the equal, neatly matched spaces of seasons and the unequal periods of years allotted to the four ages points up ways in which Byrhtferth is aware of the contingency of the scheme; he knows, despite his respect for order and correspondence, the ways in which the schemes displayed in his diagrammatic constructs do not necessarily match either other textual constructs of age or the lived experience of ageing. These are sets produced according to requirements for order and opposition. What Rosenthal concluded for later medieval England seems also to hold true for Old English representations of old age:

harmonies and not a summary of the general monastic attitude to it, as the latter part of this article will demonstrate.

[19] Byrhtferth, *Enchiridion*, ed. by Baker and Lapidge, pp. 12–13.

[20] Bede, *The Reckoning of Time*, trans. by Wallis, p. 101.

[21] For the use of such images, see Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*.

> there is a genuine dissonance between what literature — be it normative, didactic or creative — said about life and the life span and what men and women actually experienced [...]. Men (and women) who looked at their own world with even the most minimal analytic of discursive curiosity *knew* that life was not invariably ebbing away at 40 or 50 [...] yet they were content to read and write to this effect, to receive and transmit cultural lore that held messages to which they were attuned regarding the pre-determined and fleeting nature of life; nor did they give much indication of wonder at the discord or dissonance.[22]

After all, *all* 'old men' of Anglo-Saxon England cannot have been recognizable in the negative terms offered by such representations, while Byrhtferth, probably writing his manual at around the age of forty-one if Baker and Lapidge's reconstruction of his life is correct,[23] seems an unlikely candidate to become the chilly and decrepit old man of such representations in just a few years' time. This leaves us the question of what other representations of old age are available and how they may interact with this scheme.

Beyond the remit of neat sets and carefully balanced constructions, Old English texts using the tropes of heroic values and poetry present old age as something which may have its redeeming features but is primarily undesirable. Indeed, in some contexts the process of growing old seems so unsettling that it may be kept at a distance through personification, myth, and metaphor. In the heroic poem *Beowulf*, for example, Hrothgar warns Beowulf about what the future may hold. Although Beowulf currently has 'mægenes blæd' (the glory of strength), he will succumb to one of a number of unpleasant ends soon enough:

> Nu is þines mægenes blæd
> ane hwile; eft sona bið
> þæt þec adl oððe ecg eafoþes getwæfeð,
> oððe fyres feng oððe flodes wylm,
> oððe gripe meces oððe gares fliht,
> oððe atoll yldo; oððe eagena bearhtm
> forsiteð ond forsworceð; semninga bið
> þæt ðec, dryhtguma, dead oferswyðeð.[24]

> [Now is the glory of your strength for a while; afterwards it will at once be that sickness or the sword will separate you from power, or the fire's embrace or the

[22] Rosenthal, *Old Age in Late Medieval England*, pp. 5–6.

[23] This is based on the dating of Byrhtferth's works, and assumes a date of birth around 970 (Byrhtferth, *Enchiridion*, ed. by Baker and Lapidge, p. xxxiii).

[24] *Beowulf*, ed. by Klaeber, ll. 1761–68, p. 66.

surge of the wave, or the blade's grip or the flight of the spear, or terrible old age; or the brightness of your eyes will lessen and grow dark; it will be suddenly that death overthrows you, warrior.]

Among these possibilities is 'terrible old age' ('atoll yldo'), whose attack is as fierce and fatal as that of sword, spear, or flame. Hrothgar should know; 'yldo' is said to be the one who has deprived the King of the joys of strength, and harmed many others too: 'hine yldo benam | mægenes wynnum, se þe oft manegum scod'.[25]

This personification of old age is not confined to heroic contexts either. In the second book of the complex and rather puzzling Old English dialogue 'Solomon and Saturn', generally considered as part of the tradition of wisdom poetry, Saturn puts one of a series of riddles to Solomon:

Ac hwæt is ðæt wundor ðe geond ðas worold færeð,
styrnenga gæð, staðolas beateð,
aweceð uopdropan, winneð oft hider?
Ne mæg hit steorrra ne stan ne se steapa gimm,
wæter ne wildeor wihte beswican,
ac him on hand gæð heardes and hnesces,
micles and mætes; him to mose sceall
gegangan geara gehwelce grundbuendra,
lyftfleogendra, laguswemmendra,
ðria ðreoteno ðusendgerimes.

[But what is that strange thing that travels through this world, goes on inexorably, beats at foundations, causes tears of sorrow, and often comes here? Neither star nor stone nor eye-catching jewel, neither water nor wild beast can deceive it at all, but into its hand go hard and soft, small and great. Every year there must go to feed it three times thirteen thousand of all that live on ground or fly in the air or swim in the sea.][26]

This inexorable and consuming foe is instantly named by Solomon:

Yldo beoð on eorðan æghwæs cræftig;
mid hiðendre hildewræsne,
rumre racenteage, ræceð wide,
langre linan, lisseð eall ðæt heo wile.

[25] *Beowulf*, ed. by Klaeber, ll. 1886–87, p. 70.

[26] *Poems of Wisdom and Learning*, ed. and trans. by Shippey, p. 91. *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. by Dobbie, ll. 282–91, p. 42. For discussion of the rarity of old age as a subject for riddles, and references to possibly analogous riddles on 'devouring time', see Hill, 'Saturn's Time Riddle'.

Beam heo abreoteð and bebriceð telgum,
asyreð standendnes stefne on siðe,
afilleð hine on foldan; friteð æfter ðam
wildne fugol. Heo oferwigeð wulf,
hio oferbideð stanas, heo oferstigeð style,
hio abiteð iren mid ome, deð uisc swa.

[Old age has power over everything on earth. She reaches far and wide with her ravaging slave-chain, her fetters are broad, her rope is long, she subdues everything that she wants to. She smashes trees and breaks their branches, in her progress she uproots the standing trunk and fells it to the ground. After that she eats the wild bird. She fights better than a wolf, she waits longer than a stone, she proves stronger than steel, she bites iron with rust; she does the same to us.][27]

The personification of old age as an invincible *female* emphasizes how unnatural this process appears to fighting men; she is a foe they cannot defeat, neither man nor monster. Yet, conversely, she is part of the natural world even as she destroys it: her power is as devastating to plants, animals, and metals as it is to humans. Old age personified allows ageing to be seen not as a long, slow process of decline for an inhabited body, but rather as a specific act of violence against an individual. An ageing body becomes in this context a wounded body, unable to operate effectively as the heroic model demands.

Although less violent in description, the elegiac poem *The Seafarer* also portrays how a personified 'yldo' comes upon a man, at which 'onsyn blacað, | gomelfeax gnornað' (the face pales, the grey-haired one mourns).[28] The pale face is a forerunner of death, and the mourning of the old man for his departed companions points to his own imminent end. Of course, the image of the attack of old age leads to more than the loss of strength and companionship; its unexpected appropriation into a Christian context in the Old English *Genesis* leads to the (entirely heroic) claim that if a man eats from the wrong tree in the garden 'old age must take from him deeds of courage, joys and lordship' — his ability to fight, but also his authority and the pleasures of his life.[29]

[27] *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. by Dobbie, ll. 293–302, p. 42. *Poems of Wisdom and Learning*, ed. by Shippey, pp. 91 and 93.

[28] *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry*, ed. by Muir, ll. 91–92, p. 232.

[29] *The Junius Manuscript*, ed. by Krapp, ll. 484–85, p. 18; old age deprives people of 'ellendæda, dreama and drihtscipes'. If, however, a man should eat fruit from the tree of life instead, it would ensure that 'old age did not harm him after that' ('him æfter þy yldo ne derede'; ll. 470–73, p. 18). The promise of life without old age then becomes the salvific promise associated with life after death; see the conclusion of this article.

The presence of the goddess Elli in Norse mythology shows that this personification is found beyond the Anglo-Saxon context. Despite being weak in physical terms (and female), Elli proves to be more than a match for Thor in a wrestling contest because she represents old age; even Thor himself is unable to overcome her with his usual display of strength. A similar sentiment can be found in stanza 16 of the Norse poem known as *Hávamál*:

> Ósnjallr maðr
> hyggsk munu ey lifa
> ef hann við víg varask;
> en elli gefr
> honum engi frið
> þótt honum geirar gefi.
>
> [The unwise man
> thinks that he will live forever
> if he shuns battle;
> but old age [Elli] will give
> no peace to him,
> though spears may spare him.][30]

Even those warriors who have avoided an untimely but heroic end are doomed to lose one final and rather less glorious battle — the one with old age.

These personifications of old age represent it as at least as frightening and inevitable as death itself. This may be a way of dealing with the unpredictability of the ageing process; old age is uncomfortably situated between living life to the full and the helplessness of death, yet difficult to describe (and thus control) in anything but the broadest terms. By collapsing it into a single attack by an outside force, the idea of its impact can to some extent be contained, even as age's uncontrollable and apparently arbitrary effects continue to be evident. The open-endedness of the category of old age in the life cycle appears to be put to entirely functional use here; depending on the severity of the 'attack', the last period of life may stretch out or be abruptly cut short. However, this imagery also serves to provide a more 'heroic' aspect to ageing; the implication is of man as a warrior cut down while still strong, with no shame attached to the defeat. This is quite a dif-

[30] *Hávamál*, ed. by Evans, p. 42. The text is part of the collection known as the *Poetic Edda*, extant in the thirteenth-century manuscript known as the Codex Regius (Reykjavik, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum, MS GKS 2365 4to). For an overview, see Harris, 'Eddic Poetry'.

ferent portrayal to that of the phlegm-laden senior in Byhrtferth's cycle, and one which finds its fullest expression in *Beowulf*'s description of the mysterious King Scyld of the Danes who departs on his journey (that is, dies) still 'felahror' or very strong, active, or vigorous.[31]

Indeed, it would appear that the idea of sudden death while still active is a desirable outcome of the ageing process, for a warrior at least. Amos discusses the uses of 'har' (grey(-haired), by extension 'hoary') in collocations which combine it with 'warrior', attempting to demonstrate that it is positive in connotation: 'in the heroic world of Old English poetry', he concludes, 'grey or white hair was no stigma'.[32] In fact, the texts show that grey hair and success in battle are not usually found together. Consider the ageing King Constantine of the Scots, described as 'har hilderinc' (grey-haired warrior) in the poem celebrating the Battle of Brunanburh in 937, one of six poems which appear amongst the prose of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* between the years of 937 and 1065.[33] The text emphasizes that Constantine is a 'beorn blandenfeax' (grey-haired warrior), but he is far from victorious: he loses both the battle and his son.[34] Similarly Byrhtnoth is represented as a 'har hilderinc' at the very moment of his death during the Battle of Maldon (991) in the poem of the same name;[35] this is hardly a reference which emphasizes men's ability to function as successful warriors during their old age. These instances do, however, show older men 'going down fighting', and if their defeat can be directly mapped onto their age it merely serves to reinforce the idea that 'terrible old age' is their real foe and the one from whom there is no escape.[36]

[31] *Beowulf*, ed. by Klaeber, l. 27. Arguably, this is also the case with Beowulf, who is described as a 'gomela' or old man towards the end of the poem but is not shown ageing and still manages to take on the dragon. His inability to defeat it alone and his own subsequent death reveal a man who may be struck down rather past his prime but is still archetypal of the hero who 'goes out fighting'. For an alternative view, see Pope, 'Beowulf's Old Age'. Pope argues that Beowulf is 'presented as old in years and experience, yet still untouched by the ordinary infirmities of age' (p. 56) and that his death is due to the scale of the challenge presented by the dragon rather than any diminishing of his strength.

[32] Amos, 'Old English Words for *Old*', p. 102.

[33] *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. by Dobbie, l. 37 ('se froda') and l. 39 ('har hilderinc'), p. 18.

[34] *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. by Dobbie, ll. 45–46, p. 18. Constantine's designation as an 'eald inwidda' suggests that experience can bring guile as well as wisdom.

[35] *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. by Dobbie, l. 169, p. 11.

[36] For a related but differently imagined view of death in the context of learned Carolingian poetry, see Theodore of Orléans's image of 'dreadful old age' as one who 'devours all things' in Dutton, 'Beyond the Topos of Senescence', p. 79.

Grey-haired warriors who are *not* shown actually in battle do not seem to fare terribly well. In another of the *Chronicle* poems known as 'The Death of Edgar', the 'gamolfeax hæleð' (grey-haired warrior) Oslac is exiled despite the fact that he is 'wis and wordsnotor' (wise and eloquent).[37] In *Beowulf*, grey-haired Hrothgar[38] is also a 'har hilderinc',[39] and yet the text establishes repeatedly that he is no longer the active, fighting king he once was. It is certainly *not* the case that his old age alone prevents him from confronting Grendel: Grendel's monstrosity demands something more than normal human strength if he is to be defeated, and it is too often forgotten that Beowulf has the strength of thirty men in a single grasp of his hand.[40] Yet Hrothgar is clearly of an age to step aside from direct leadership in battle, perhaps most clearly signified in his gift to Beowulf of his own war-saddle: 'þæt wæs hildesetl heahcyninges, | ðonne sweorda gelac sunu Healfdenes | efnan wolde' (that was the high-king's war-seat, when the son of Halfdene wished to engage in the play of swords).[41] Apparently the King no longer uses it. Moreover, Beowulf's depiction of Hrothgar as 'eldo gebunden' (bound by age), lamenting the loss of his youth and battle prowess, provides one of the stronger moments of pathos in the poem.[42] Calling Hrothgar a 'warrior' may be a form of respect, but it is clearly no longer an accurate description. Amos's assessment of the positive nature of grey hair in relation to warriors is thus in need of some adjustment.[43]

The elderly who can no longer fight, or have never fought, have other functions in Old English poetry, of course: to deal out wisdom and advice to those who can and do engage in battle. Much of their activity can be expressed through the semantic variations of the word 'frod', variously translated as 'old', 'wise', or 'old and wise' depending upon its context.[44] Its possibilities have been noted and

[37] *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. by Dobbie, ll. 25–28, p. 23.

[38] Both 'gamolfeax' and 'blondenfeax'are used of him, meaning 'grey-haired' and 'having hair mixed with grey'.

[39] *Beowulf*, ed. by Klaeber, l. 608, p. 23; l. 1791, p. 67; l. 1873, p. 70.

[40] For the most recent suggestion that it is merely old age which prevents Hrothgar from 'protect[ing] his people from the menacing of Grendel', see Rothauser, 'Winter in Heorot', p. 107.

[41] *Beowulf*, ed. by Klaeber, xv, ll. 1039–41, p. 39.

[42] *Beowulf*, ed. by Klaeber, ll. 2111–13, p. 79.

[43] For a discussion of the problem of aged kings, see Irving, 'What to Do with Old Kings'. For a recent summary of the issues and interpretations surrounding Hrothgar, which do not need to be revisited here, see Rothauser, 'Winter in Heorot'.

[44] However, the apparent ambiguities concerned with 'frod' also emphasize the dangers of attributing too much significance to formulaic use of words and phrases; compare the use of 'frod wintrum' to describe the dragon in *Beowulf* (*Beowulf*, ed. by Klaeber, ll. 2275–77).

debated as a point at which lived experience and the attainment of wisdom intersect.[45] As Amos would have it, 'the experienced, it seems, can become wise, but by the time they do so, at least in Old English, they are old'.[46] It is also possible to note, however, that their wisdom and experience is often figured in direct opposition to the strength and vigour (and only occasional rashness) of the young, reflecting the oppositions set up by the scheme of the life cycle and its sets of contrasting qualities.

This opposition is built into wisdom poetry like *Precepts*, in which a 'frod fæder' (old/wise father) offers advice on good behaviour to his son,[47] while in a heroic context 'frod' Hrothgar dishes out recommendations based on his own life experience to the young and active Beowulf. Hrothgar's warnings are connected to the need for humility and good behaviour, with much the same force as the wisdom poetry.[48] By the end of the poem Beowulf himself has made the transition from young hero to 'frod cyning | eald eþelweard' (an old/wise king, old guardian of the native land), advising Wiglaf in turn.[49] Advice is similarly provided by Byrhtwold, the 'old companion' of *The Battle of Maldon*. Describing himself as 'frod feores' (old/wise of life), he is unlikely to be the most effective warrior in battle (though he is not, apparently, grey-haired). Yet he utters the poem's most famous lines, a piece of almost proverbial wisdom about the necessary increase in courage in the face of decreasing strength: 'Hige sceal þe heardra, heorte þe cenre,

[45] *Poems of Wisdom and Learning*, ed. by Shippey, p. 127. The connection between wisdom and lived experience is often discussed in relation to lines 64–65 of *The Wanderer* in which a 'share of winters in the earthly kingdom' is required (*The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry*, ed. by Muir, p. 217), but it is *Maxims II* which makes the connection with old men explicit: 'gomol snoterost, | fyrngearum frod, se þe ær feala gebideð' (an old man is wisest, wise through former years, he who experiences much beforehand). *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. by Dobbie, ll. 11–12, p. 56.

[46] Amos, 'Old English Words for *Old*', p. 97. However, even the old and wise can get it wrong: consider the 'blondenfeaxe | gomele' (grey-haired old [men], l. 1595), also described as wise ('snottre', l. 1591), who nonetheless misjudge Beowulf's probable fate at the mere.

[47] *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry*, ed. by Muir, ll. 1–2, p. 225. The father is 'modsnottor, maga cystum eald' (wise-minded, a man old in good qualities). The repeated use of terms such as 'frod' and 'þoncsnottor' (wise in thought) in the poem, interspersed with 'eald' and 'se gomela' (the old man) connect old age and wisdom overtly.

[48] Beowulf describes Hrothgar as one who 'syllic spell | rehte æfter rihte' (told a strange story rightly) and 'wintrum frod worn gemunde' (old/wise in years, recalled many things)': *Beowulf*, ed. by Klaeber, l. 1724, p. 64; ll. 2109–10 and 2114, p. 79.

[49] *Beowulf*, ed. by Klaeber, ll. 2209–10, p. 83 and l. 2513, p. 94. For discussion of terms for old age in *Beowulf*, see Sisam, *The Structure of Beowulf*, p. 23.

| mod sceal þe mare, þe ure mægen lytlað' (Mind must be the more hardy, heart the keener, spirit must be the greater as our strength lessens).[50] This encouragement to younger warriors expresses a response not only to an actual battle they are clearly losing, but also to the battle that men lose with old age: a shift from strength of body to strength of spirit.

The effects of this shift may be observed in Old Norse poetry, albeit in a rather different overall context. In stanza 134 of *Hávamál*, Loddfáfnir is advised that he should never sneer:

> at hárum þul
> hlæðu aldregi;
> opt er gott þat er gamlir kveða;
> opt ór skǫrpum belg
> skilin orð koma.
>
> [at hoary sage [...]
> there is sense oft in old men's saws;
> oft wisdom cometh
> out of withered bag.][51]

Old men might well be laughed at by the young who have not understood the ways in which wisdom and courage increase in inverse relation to the decrease of bodily strength; such laughter would be misdirected. Clearly appearances are deceptive, and the physical effects of old age should not be taken as an expression of a man's ability to contribute usefully to a community; there is a dichotomy between inner and outer states.[52]

Both the Old English wisdom poems and heroic poetry present old men in traditional roles that may be every bit as stereotyped as those found elsewhere. The wise old man can be understood as no less a caricature than the cold and snuffly old man, or the worn-out old man whose strength has failed him; all of these respond to the specific functions of the texts in which they appear. In both cases, however, the opposition between youth and age operates as a framework in which actions and ideas can be judged. Wisdom poems, sometimes voiced by

[50] *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. by Dobbie, p. 15, ll. 312–13. I translate 'mod' in its overall sense of 'the spiritual part of man, as opposed to the bodily' (Bosworth and Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, p. 693).

[51] *Hávamál*, ed. by Evans, p. 67; English translation: *Hávamál*, trans. by Hollander, p. 35.

[52] Olof Arngart suggests that the Old English *Durham Proverb* 7 ('oft in sotigum bylige searowa licgað' — probably 'often treasures lie in a sooty bag', or 'don't judge by appearances') may share a common meaning with the *Hávamál* quotation. Arngart, 'The Durham Proverbs', pp. 291 and 296 n. 7.

venerable fathers, may occasionally extol the possession of wisdom by the old, but they are more concerned with guidance for the young and those in the prime of life. As an Old English proverb from a collection based largely upon the Latin *Distichs of Cato* points out, 'when you are old, and asked for many old sayings and proverbs, then make them known to the young'.[53] Wisdom poems routinely place accounts of appropriate social conduct alongside descriptions of natural phenomena (such as the weather, or the coldness of ice) in a manner reminiscent of Byrhtferth's location of the ages of man in relation to the physical and temporal universe. In both cases, the behaviour of both young and old must be read as a response to the order of nature, confined and shaped by the need to maintain harmony at all levels of life.

Despite the beneficent passing down of wisdom inherent in this model, opposition between youth and old age is also to be expected, is even part of the moral order of the world. Hence, in the poem known as *Maxims II*, the statement that 'geogoð sceal wið yldo' (youth must be against age)[54] appears as one of a set of oppositions that include 'good [...] against evil, [...] life against death, [and] light against darkness'.[55] A further proverb extant in two manuscripts adds that heat cools, whiteness becomes soiled, love grows hostile, light darkens, and 'everyone grows old, who is not eternal'.[56] Such textual alignments of old age with cold, corruption, death, and darkness suggest an equation between physical and moral decay that is hardly matched by the sluggishness of Byrhtferth's old men. This appears as potentially dangerous to the social order in general as it is to the health of the individual, and implies that all the wisdom in the world cannot in the end provide any kind of remedy for the wound inflicted by old age.

This conflict between youth and age, along with their associated qualities, has a number of developments in the Christian context of Old English writing and sermons, where it can act as a cipher for the primacy of innocence over experience, faith over knowledge, and eternal life over temporal, physical existence. One example may be found among the numerous homilies written by Ælfric of Eynsham in the later tenth to early eleventh centuries. Ælfric's use of the life cycle

[53] *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, ed. and trans. by Swanton, p. 175.

[54] *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. by Dobbie, p. 57.

[55] *Poems of Wisdom and Learning*, ed. by Shippey, p. 79.

[56] *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. by Dobbie, l. 6, p. 109. The last line is given in Latin first, as 'Senescunt omnia que eterna non sunt', and then in a slightly clumsy Old English translation: 'æghwæt forealdað þæs þe ece ne byð' would be literally translated as 'each grows old in respect to that which is not eternal' (see *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. by Dobbie, p. 201). This poetic proverb survives in BL, MS Cotton Faustina A. x and BL, MS Royal 2. B. v.

in his sermon on the workers in the vineyard for Septuagesima Sunday draws on Gregory the Great's exposition of the five hours as the ages of man (in which the final two could both be described as 'old age').[57] However, Ælfric puts a heavy emphasis on the weakness of old age. He gives the final stages as 'yld', in which 'ðæs ealdigendan mannes mægen bið wanigende' (the ageing man's strength is waning), and 'seo forwerode ealdnyss' (this worn-out age) which is nearing death.[58] The parable of the workers in the vineyard is used in part to encourage virtue/conversion in old age: 'gif ge noldon gode lybban on cildhade. ne on geogoðe. Gecyrrað nu huruðinga. on ylde to lifes wege. nu ge habbað hwonlice to swincenne' (turn now indeed in old age to the way of life, now that you have but little to labour).[59] The turn to God should have happened at a much earlier stage; the young who do so work their day in the vineyard and earn their reward, while those who turn in old age acquire it at the last moment for minimum effort. Evidently advanced age does not necessarily result in godly living, since such exhortations to change remain necessary.[60]

The life cycle can also be used in homiletic contexts to emphasize the shortness of life on earth and the importance of eternal life after death. Hence the tenth-century Blickling Homilist points out that after youth 'raþe se wlite eft gewiteþ & to elde gecyrreþ, & he þonne siþþon mid sare geswenced bið, mid mislicum ecum & tyddernessum' (quickly this beautiful appearance departs again and turns to age, and afterwards he is then afflicted with pain, with various aches and weaknesses); this he states as illustration of the fact that 'all beauty and all fairness of life in the world proceeds and hastens to an end'.[61] The lack of ageing in heaven is emphasized, setting up youth as the ideal state of man and old age as its extreme opposite: 'Þær is þæt ece leoht buton þeostrum. Þær is geogoþ buton ylde, þær is þæt æþele lif buton geendunge' (there is the eternal light without darkness. There

[57] See Burrow, *The Ages of Man*, pp. 61–63 for discussion.

[58] Ælfric, *Catholic Homilies*, ed. by Godden, p. 44.

[59] Ælfric, *Catholic Homilies*, ed. by Godden, p. 45.

[60] The potential misbehaviour of the elderly seems to be referred to elsewhere by Ælfric; in his sermon for Sexagesima, he judges it 'very unfitting and shameful that worn-out (*forwerode*) and impotent men desire marriage', since marriage is only for the procreation of children. Ælfric, *Catholic Homilies*, ed. by Godden, p. 56: 'Hit is swiðe ungedafenlic and scandlic. þæt forwerode menn and untymende gifta wilnian. ðonne gifta ne sind gesette for nanum ðinge. buton for bearnteame.' Any desires the 'worn out' have for marriage would indicate a corrupt — and corrupting — interest in sex for its own sake, and also disrupt the life cycle; it is properly for those in the earlier stages, and late marriage may rule out the possibility of procreation.

[61] *The Blickling Homilies*, ed. by Morris, pp. 59 and 57.

is youth without old age, there is the noble life without an ending).[62] In this the homilist has various writers to follow, not least Bede; in 'De die iudicii' the latter specifically excludes *fessa senectus* (tired old age) from heaven, in addition to the more usual references to the absence of night, pain, and sorrow found in the Apocalypse.[63] Heaven, then, is entirely free from the oppositional states bound into the structure of the natural world.

This is one of several instances in which Christianity provides a means of redeeming — or at the least, reframing — some of the negative aspects of old age. Where portrayals of the elderly in heroic contexts are inevitably concerned primarily with the loss of physical strength, the saints and biblical figures known to the Anglo-Saxons through Christian history and hagiography demonstrate that there are other considerations to be taken into account. Not least of this is the understanding of the flawed, oppositional world as merely a precursor to the ideal state of heaven and eternity, and old age as the final step towards that better place.

In a Christian framework, old age is, of course, a natural consequence of original sin as the quotation from *Genesis A* above makes clear, whether the loss of youth is configured in heroic terms or not. However, in later medieval texts, the moral consequence of old age is often portrayed as an increase in greed and lecherous impulses, while there is little sign of this in the literature of the Anglo-Saxons. Rather, prolonged old age for those who are spiritual warriors rather than physical ones seems to be desirable: saints may live to be very old, and miraculous extensions of life come from God. Indeed, Ælfric of Eynsham notes in his *Lives of Saints* and *Catholic Homilies* that Saint Martin dies at eighty-one, Saint Maurus at seventy-two, and Philip the Apostle at eighty-seven and that Saint Eventius has been baptized for seventy years when he is martyred.[64] The *Old English Martyrology* gives Saint Luke's age as seventy-seven and that of Saint Hilarion as eighty, while Saint Anthony makes it to one hundred and five.[65]

Even so, an awareness that the Bible showed men living to much greater ages than Anglo-Saxons might expect or even saints achieve is evident in the references to great age which were included in Old English versions of biblical texts like the poem now referred to as *Genesis B*.[66] Ælfric explains that the extreme old

[62] *The Blickling Homilies*, ed. by Morris, p. 65.

[63] Bede, 'De die iudicii', ed. by Fraipont and Hurst. Apocalypse 21. 4 and 21. 25.

[64] Ælfric, *Lives of Saints*, ed. by Skeat, II, 305 and I, 168; Ælfric, *Catholic Homilies*, ed. by Godden, pp. 298 and 310.

[65] *An Old English Martyrology*, ed. by Herzfeld, pp. 188, 193, and 20.

[66] The Old Testament details the extended lifespans of Adam, who lived to 930 (Genesis 5. 24), and his descendants; Noah, for example, lived for 950 years (Genesis 9. 29), and became

age referred to in the Old Testament was specific to that context, as he makes clear in his *Sermo de memoria sanctorum*:

> we ne motan lange on ðysum life beon .
> And þæt is godes mildheortnyss . þeah ðe hit dogle sy .
> On anginne ðissere worulde þaþa heo wynsym wæs .
> and menn moston lybban be heora lustum ða .
> þa wæs langsum lif . swa þæt hi leofodon
> sume nigon hund geara . on ðæra heah-fædera timan .
> sume eahta hund geara . and sume eac leng .
> Nu is ure lif ungelic heora [...]
> Nu hæfð god eac gescyrt swyþe ure dagas.[67]
>
> [we may not be long in this life;
> and that is out of the mercy of God, although it be secret.
> At the beginning of this world, when it was beautiful,
> and men were able to live according to their desires,
> then life was long so that some lived
> nine hundred years in the times of the patriarchs,
> some eight hundred years, and likewise some longer.
> Now our life is different to theirs [...]
> Now, moreover, God has very much shortened our days.]

This 'shortening of days' provides a divinely ordained reason for the fracture between the biblical representations and those suggested by the life cycle, or experienced by Ælfric's audience. It forms a hermeneutic framework for these Old Testament texts, mediating between convention and expectation without placing exceptionally long-lived patriarchs in the realm of the inexplicably unfamiliar. Once again, it aligns lifespan with the nature of the world: long life and the pleasures of man belong to a time when the world was beautiful. Thus the decline in human old age may be seen as a microcosm of the decay of the world itself, struggling through its final ages. At the same time, it leaves open the possibility that God may also choose to lengthen life, marking longevity in prospective (if not automatic) relation to devoutness.

As long as God does lengthen their days, saints and biblical characters use their status as a contrast to the young in much the same way as in Old English wisdom

a father in his five hundredth year (Genesis 5. 32). Abraham and Isaac lived to 175 (Genesis 25. 7) and 180 (Genesis 35. 28) respectively. King David does fit the stereotype of the old man by being unable to keep warm during his final years (1 Kings 1. 1).

[67] Ælfric, *Lives of Saints*, ed. by Skeat, 1, ll. 230–37 and 242.

poems. The Old English poetic version of Genesis represents the six-hundred-year-old Noah as 'shrewd amidst the young' as he boards the ark,[68] while in saints' *Lives* old men may be models for behaviour or teachers of the young.[69] Ælfric's Old English version of the biblical Maccabees provides a portrait of Eleazar, an elderly man threatened with torture and death unless he will give up his faith. His response considers how his constancy and death will afford an example to the young, since he is '[too] old for deception'.[70] In the *Old English Martyrology* (a lengthy ninth-century hagiographic collection), the entry for 27 July shows a young Saint Simeon finding out from an 'eald mon' what the book he has heard read might be.[71] The old man's explanation sets Simeon himself on the path to conversion and eventual sanctity. Similar transfers of knowledge and doctrine can be found in the Latin saints' *Lives* as well: according to Wulfstan of Winchester in the late tenth century, Æthelwold's devout behaviour includes committing to memory 'what he learnt from the elders' teaching'.[72] On occasion in this text, old men can even be compared to angels; in Dunstan's dream, the vision is interpreted by 'a priest with white hair like an angel' who is addressed as 'venerable old man'.[73] Here the marks of age become the marks that confirm the godly status of their bearers, and their role as teachers and interpreters aligns them with the messengers of God rather than the repositories of earthly wisdom.

In saints' *Lives*, the elderly also find a place as reliable witnesses to events. Their age operates as an index to their trustworthiness, and in some instances this is because long life means that they have actually experienced the events described. Thus Ælfric's *Passio sancti eadmundi regis et martyris* faithfully recounts the line of transmission of Saint Edmund's story: Abbo of Fleury heard it from Dunstan, who heard it in youth when Edmund's sword-bearer, by then a 'forealdod' (very

[68] 'Noe hæfde | [...] syxhund wintra [...] gleaw mid geogoðe', 'Genesis B' in *The Junius Manuscript*, ed. by Krapp, ll. 1367–70, p. 43.

[69] The wisdom gained through experience is not limited to Christians: in 'The Hodoeporicon of St Willibald' by Huneberc of Heidenheim, it is to 'a certain rich old man' that Willibald and his companions are taken by 'pagan Saracens', so that he may discover their origins and business: Huneberc of Heidenheim, 'The Hodoeporicon of St Willibald', trans. by Talbot, p. 152.

[70] He claims 'ic eom eald to hiwigenne': Ælfric, *Lives of Saints*, ed. by Skeat, II, 72. Another example from Ælfric's 'Maccabees' shows Mattathius growing old, and so teaching his sons in faith (p. 82).

[71] *An Old English Martyrology*, ed. by Herzfeld, p. 128.

[72] *Maiorum traditione*, although it is not clear whether this means his elders or the Church Fathers. Wulfstan, *The Life of St Æthelwold*, ed. by Lapidge and Winterbottom, p. 10 and n. 3.

[73] Wulfstan, *The Life of St Æthelwold*, ed. by Lapidge and Winterbottom, pp. 57 and 56.

elderly) man, told it to King Athelstan.[74] There are instances in the Latin *Lives* too. Writing in the late seventh century, Adomnán includes things discovered 'by hearing them from the lips of certain informed and trustworthy aged men'. His witnesses include Oisséne who is 'a religious old man', and Luguid, 'a holy old man' (*sanctus senex*).[75] Several hundred years later, Wulfstan of Winchester follows the same method when he writes Æthelwold's *Life* from personal experience and by recording what he 'learned from older men whose account I could trust'.[76]

In certain circumstances, it is implied that the limitations of old age can be overcome by privileging the spiritual over the physical. It is telling that all such examples can be found in the Old English or Latin saints' *Lives*: clearly holy living, combined with the intervention of God, makes this possible. In the ninth-century *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*, Brendan and his monks meet 'an extremely grave and dignified old man with white hair and a shining face' who takes them to the monastery of Saint Ailbe. Here loaves are divinely supplied to the monks and prevent them from ageing: 'It is eighty years since this began and we never feel any older or more feeble.'[77] Similarly, they encounter Paul the Hermit, aged 140 and sustained by God on nothing but spring water. Paul has lived on his island for ninety years and is covered by his long white hair in place of clothing.[78] Although he expects death shortly he is not enfeebled: his extreme old age *without* physical decline is a marker of holiness.

In some instances among the saints it is the determination to live in a holy manner which allows individuals to overcome the physical restrictions of old age. Despite his years, Columba runs ahead of the others to his death in the church, and Zosimus, having caught sight of Mary of Egypt, 'overcoming his old age [...] ran on advancing with a very swift course'.[79] Bede asserts that Ceolfrid, abbot of Wearmouth and Jarrow in the late seventh century, 'would not allow considerations of age or infirmity [...] to soften the rigorous standards he had accepted as part of tradition', while the eighth-century 'Life of Boniface' maintains that

[74] Ælfric, *Lives of Saints*, ed. by Skeat, II, 314.

[75] Adomnán, *Life of Columba*, ed. by Anderson and Anderson, pp. 7, 23, and 227.

[76] Wulfstan, *The Life of St Æthelwold*, ed. by Lapidge and Winterbottom, p. 3.

[77] 'The Voyage of St Brendan', trans. by Webb, pp. 46 and 47.

[78] 'The Voyage of St Brendan', trans. by Webb, pp. 64–65.

[79] Adomnán, *Life of Columba*, ed. by Anderson and Anderson, p. 225; Zosimus runs 'witodlice his ealdan ylde ofer-getiligende': Ælfric, *Lives of Saints*, ed. by Skeat, II, 12–13. Compare also his long service in the monastery: 'Zosimus on þam mynstre wæs drohtnigende . an hund wintra' (Ælfric, *Lives of Saints*, ed. by Skeat, II, 52).

'even to infirm old age he imitated in particular the practice of the ancient fathers in daily committing to memory the writings of the prophets and apostles'.[80] Boniface dies while travelling to confirm new converts, and thus is shown as active to the end.[81]

The physical weakness brought on by old age appears rarely in Old English texts, but more frequently in their Latin sources and counterparts.[82] In the Latin saints' *Lives*, extreme old age had been given a model much earlier in the fourth-century *Life of St Anthony*, in which two disciples were said to be 'attending on Anthony to the end on account of his age' from his nineties onwards.[83] In the Anglo-Latin lives, there are various examples of fatigue and illness towards the end of life although, like much in the saints' *Lives*, these representations appear generic. Hence in Willibald's *Life*, Boniface is forced to rest on arrival at Picena 'as his limbs were weary with old age',[84] while Columba rests, 'weary with age', on his return to the monastery.[85] Columba and Ceolfrith are reduced to travelling in wagons and horse litters on account of their age,[86] and Hwætbert describes Ceolfrith at death as 'tired out equally by great age and sickness'.[87] Another elderly pilgrim is Wilfrid, 'bent under the weight of an honourable old age' during his

[80] Bede, 'Lives of the Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow', trans. by Farmer, p. 207; Willibald, 'The Life of St Boniface', trans. by Talbot, p. 115.

[81] Willibald, 'The Life of St Boniface', trans. by Talbot, pp. 135–36.

[82] Catherine Cubitt claims that 'hagiography suggests that the religious life cycle may have had a different rhythm from the secular: saints' *vitae* are generally uninterested in the process of ageing and present a static view in which the saint moves from a holy childhood (reflecting the importance of child oblation) to death without emphasis on ageing. In Old English poetry by contrast, old age is associated with the wisdom of experience and with decay and physical decline' (Cubitt, 'Memory and Narrative', pp. 65–66). The present article shows that some *vitae* make specific use of descriptions of ageing saints and that both wisdom and decay can also be detected in these.

[83] Athanasius, *Vita S. Antoni*, ed. by Schaff and Wace, p. 91.

[84] Willibald, 'The Life of St Boniface', trans. by Talbot, p. 130.

[85] Adomnán, *Life of Columba*, ed. by Anderson and Anderson, p. 220.

[86] For Columba's wagon ride, see Adomnán, *Life of Columba*, ed. by Anderson and Anderson, pp. 217–19. For Ceolfrith's horse litter, see the *Anonymous Life of St Ceolfrith*, ed. and trans. by Whitelock, p. 706, and Bede, 'Lives of the Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow', trans. by Farmer, p. 208.

[87] Hwætberht's description is in the *Anonymous Life of St Ceolfrith*, ed. and trans. by Whitelock, p. 705, and in Bede, 'Lives of the Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow', trans. by Farmer, p. 205. The combination of age and sickness, however, only appears in the *Anonymous Life of St Ceolfrith*, ed. and trans. by Whitelock, p. 706.

final visit to Rome.[88] Of Cuthbert, the *Anonymous Life* records that he resigns the bishopric and returns to solitary life 'though his body was now infirm and afflicted with a certain sickness'; according to Bede, Cuthbert wastes away during three weeks of illness before death,[89] while Benedict Biscop dies after 'three years of creeping paralysis'.[90]

These representations in the Latin saints' *Lives* fulfil a number of functions. They emphasize the humanity and individual circumstances of the saint, avoiding the portrayal of saints as entirely exceptional to the 'normal' experience of human life. The opportunity to provide an example of endurance is usefully didactic: patient suffering provides an example that is perhaps not beyond the reach of a less saintly audience of Christians. Finally, such scenes accentuate the saint's dedication to faith and duty, since journeys, pilgrimages, and other visits of spiritual significance continue to be taken despite the physical cost.

Not much of this appears in comparable Old English texts, however. The *Old English Martyrology* does show the ageing Saint Wunnoc as unable to work outside, but this is the pretext for a miracle when his task is achieved with divine help.[91] Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* mentions only Zosimus (in the account of Saint Mary of Egypt) and Saint Martin of Tours as enfeebled by old age. For Zosimus, his age means that he is too weak to dig a grave in which to bury Mary, but once again, it provides the excuse for a miracle, since a lion arrives to help him out.[92] Martin is the only saint in the *Old English Martyrology* typical of the representations in the Latin *Lives*: he mentions his 'failing age' but maintains that he will not use it as an excuse to give up serving God.[93] Ælfric describes how 'wearð he untrumod eallum lymum' (he became weakened in all limbs); Martin dies after suffering fever for a further few days, thus proving himself both human and holy.[94]

However, there is some enjoyment to be had in old age, in both secular and religious contexts. Latin classical writing on the benefits of old age suggests that time to enjoy food, drink, and books is the chief concern of secular old age, along

[88] Stephanus, 'Life of St Wilfrid', trans. by Webb, p. 187.

[89] *Anonymous Life of St Cuthbert*, ed. and trans. by Colgrave, p. 128: 'languente iam corpore quadam infirmitate depresso'. The text dates from around 700. Bede, 'Life of St Cuthbert', trans. by Webb, pp. 116 and 119.

[90] Bede, 'Lives of the Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow', trans. by Farmer, p. 195.

[91] *An Old English Martyrology*, ed. by Herzfeld, p. 200.

[92] Ælfric, *Lives of Saints*, ed. by Skeat, II, 12 and 52.

[93] Ælfric, *Lives of Saints*, ed. by Skeat, II, 302.

[94] Ælfric, *Catholic Homilies*, ed. by Godden, p. 296.

with family and friends.[95] Even those within the medieval Church can see the attractions of this, as may be found in the prophesies of Columba concerning Domnall and Óingus in Adomnán's Latin *Life*. In both cases, Columba predicts for them *mors placida*, a peaceful death, in old age and surrounded by friends.[96] While the emphasis on the circumstances of death itself reflects the *Life*'s Christian agenda, the prophecies serve to emphasize that longevity *is* desirable if shared with companions; neither a short life nor a long but lonely one will do.

What might be considered 'good old age' for those within the Church is described in greater detail in the *Life of Columba*, again through the saint's prophecies. The child Ligu Cen calad, the sick young man Fintén, and the (eventual) monk Librán are all set to live for a long time and die *in bona senectute*.[97] This means that they are in a good state spiritually at the point of death, having lived virtuously for a long time. That all these references to 'good old age' appear in the prophecies of Columba and share common phrasing and characteristics suggests that they are part of the patterning of the text and encode what is considered an 'appropriate' old age for either secular or religious people. The term is used in the Vulgate Latin to describe the passing of King David, who dies *in senectute bona* according to 1 Paralipomenon 29. 28, being also *plenus dierum* (full of days). The same phrase is used of Augustine's death at the age of seventy-six in Possidius's *Life*, and may also carry the implications of good health in latter life: until his final illness Augustine continues preaching 'unceasingly, vigorously, and powerfully, with sound mind and sound judgement'. He dies 'with all his limbs and organs unimpaired, and sound in sight and hearing', as apparently does Saint Anthony despite extreme old age.[98]

Hence, while some of the same ideas and tropes are shared between heroic poetry and other contexts for the description of old age, the hagiographic model seems a great deal more positive about the experience of old age. Its grey-headed men are as close to death in the saints' *Lives*, whether in Old English or in Latin, as they are in heroic poems, but with an emphasis on what is about to be gained in heaven rather than what has been lost in life. For example, Ælfric's Old English *Lives of Saints* shows Eleazar, 'har-wencge and eald' (grey-cheeked and old) win-

[95] See Parkin, 'Ageing in Antiquity'. Moses Finley points out that for the 'leisured classes' of classical antiquity who survived beyond their middle years, 'the evidence of creative activity in old age, even great old age, is plentiful and dramatic' (Finley, 'The Elderly in Classical Antiquity', p. 396).

[96] Adomnán, *Life of Columba*, ed. by Anderson and Anderson, pp. 35 and 37.

[97] Adomnán, *Life of Columba*, ed. by Anderson and Anderson, pp. 109, 139, and 161.

[98] Possidius, 'The Life of St Augustine', trans. by Hoare, p. 71. The text dates to the fifth century.

ning himself a saintly death, while in the Latin *vita* of Ceolfrith the Abbot's 'grey hairs' are commended to the Pope by Abbot Hwætberht and accompany him to a dignified death.[99] These are not men struggling to maintain a warrior status that is more titular than real, and there is no sense of failure and doubt associated with their departure from this life, unlike that which the heroic context provides even for a thoroughly 'Christian' protagonist like Byrhtnoth. While hagiography constrains the actions and portrayals of its central characters just as tightly as heroic poetry, it reverses the significance of their ageing and allows for death in old age to be the culminating point of their sanctity. By making space for a different kind of model for life, the saints' *Lives* show the potential for a different kind of death as well.

In fact, the death of the saints becomes not a defeat by old age, but a triumph in which earthly life is successfully exchanged for eternal life. In some instances this is physically represented as youthful looks that return in death as a sign of the resurrection to come. Victoria Thompson has discussed how Bishop Æthelwold's corpse regains its milk-and-roses complexion, 'so that his face in a way looked like that of a seven-year old boy',[100] and a similar change comes upon the face of Edward the Confessor, according to the *Vita Eadwardi*.[101] Both of these follow a tradition of the shining, glorious appearance of saints in death, such as Columba, whose 'face continued to be ruddy, and in a wonderful degree gladdened by the vision of angels'.[102] Saint Martin's body also appears 'on wuldre | beorhtre þonne glæs . hwittre þonne meolc . | and his andwlita scean swiþor þonne leoht' (in glory, | brighter than glass, whiter than milk, | and his countenance shone more than light).[103] In the return of elderly men to a youthful appearance the cycle of life is literally completed, although it is a spiritual life which is then begun, not a repetition of the earthly cycle.

Outside of either the heroic or the hagiographical model, there are glimpses of the possible lifespans as opposed to the set years of the life cycle, and of various literary images which suggest a somewhat pragmatic attitude. Historical writing,

[99] Ælfric, *Lives of Saints*, ed. by Skeat, II, 68; *Anonymous Life of St Ceolfrith*, ed. and trans. by Whitelock, p. 705; it was used in Bede, 'Lives of the Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow', trans. by Farmer, p. 205.

[100] Thompson, 'The View from the Edge', p. 95 and n. 20; Wulfstan, *The Life of St Æthelwold*, ed. by Lapidge and Winterbottom, pp. 62–63.

[101] Thompson, 'The View from the Edge', p. 96.

[102] Adomnán, *Life of Columba*, ed. by Anderson and Anderson, p. 227.

[103] Ælfric, *Lives of Saints*, ed. by Skeat, II, 304–05, and Ælfric, *Catholic Homilies*, ed. by Godden, p. 518.

for example, such as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, presents more than a few long-lived Anglo-Saxon kings, judging from the lengths of their reigns. Between the mid-seventh and mid-ninth centuries, the *Chronicle* mentions at least six kings who reigned for more than thirty years,[104] while Bede gives another two in his *Ecclesiastical History*.[105] These kings must have been reasonably senior towards the end of their reigns, and certainly past the age of forty-eight, yet the texts do not imply that they spent large parts of their rule in decrepitude. The ages and careers of abbots and bishops are shown as similarly prolonged, since the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* lists several who held their posts for more than thirty, or even forty, years.[106] Indeed, the clergy were perfectly capable of wishing long life upon one another as something desirable: as Brihtwold, archbishop of Canterbury, writes to Forthhere, bishop of Sherborne, in the eighth century, 'May Jesus Christ our Lord preserve your Reverence unharmed to an advanced age'.[107]

The letters of Boniface provide another glimpse of a more down-to-earth experience of old age than that outlined by the agenda of sanctity and endurance. Boniface does not receive miraculous assistance in his tasks, nor does his strength remain unaffected, and he sometimes refers to the practical problems of his increasing age. In a letter to Abbot Duddo in 735, Boniface describes himself as 'now failing in strength and approaching in every limb the way of all earthly things'.[108] Later, he asks Bishop Daniel of Winchester for a book 'in which the six Prophets are contained in one volume in clear letters written in full. [...] you could not give me a greater comfort in my old age [...] with my fading sight I can-

[104] Æthelberht of Kent, fifty-three (or fifty-six) years; Penda of Mercia, thirty years (entry for 626); Æthelbald of Mercia, forty-one years (716); Cynewulf of Wessex, thirty-one years (755); Offa of Mercia, between thirty-nine and forty-one years (757); Egbert of Wessex, thirty-seven years (836): *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. and trans. by Swanton, pp. 23, 24–25, 42–43, 48–49, 50, 62–63.

[105] Wihtred of Kent, thirty-four and a half years, and Ine, thirty-seven years: Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*, ed. and trans. by Whitelock, v. 23 and v. 7, pp. 587–686 (pp. 681 and 670).

[106] Columba was abbot of Iona for thirty-two years and died at seventy-seven (entry for 565). Wilfrid was bishop for forty-five years (709); John of Beverley for thirty-three years (721); Daniel for forty-three years (745); Frithuberht of Hexham for thirty-four years (766). Brihtwold was archbishop for thirty-seven years (731) and Egbert for thirty-six years (766). *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. and trans. by Swanton, pp. 18–19, 41, 43, 46, 51, 45, and 51.

[107] 'Brihtwold, archbishop of Canterbury, to Forthhere, bishop of Sherborne', ed. and trans. by Whitelock, p. 731.

[108] Letter 25 [34], in Boniface, *The Letters*, trans. by Emerton, p. 63.

not read well writing which is small and filled with abbreviations'.[109] Boniface's problems with his eyesight and physical strength may be predictable outcomes in terms of modern expectations of old age; however, the letters allow a representation of old age that is less generically constricted and not subject to the requirements of narrative convention. Boniface's letters show how the portrayals of old age in saints' *Lives* are tailored to specific ends and edit out the more mundane aspects of ageing in favour of the dramatic or the didactic.

Equally practical concerns appear in Asser's account of King Alfred's learning programme: old age prevents some from making progress in learning to read, and Alfred commands that they be read to by others instead.[110] A further fleeting suggestion of the experience of old age is provided much later by the author of the Old English *Life of St Nicholas* in the eleventh century. In his preface, he asks forgiveness from his readers since 'ic eom nu fiftig gear on elde, tydderlic of gecynde' (I am now fifty years old and feeble of nature).[111] By Byrhtferth's divisions, this author is only two years into old age, but appears to have fully assimilated its negative connotations.[112] However, such examples may serve to remind us that the elderly men who usually appear in chronicles, saints' *Lives*, and poetry are exceptional by definition, and representations of their longevity are conditioned by social, religious, and generic expectations. Similarly, the author of the *Life of St Nicholas* may simply be presenting a specialized version of the modesty topos.

When old age does begin to affect their work, there are several examples of bishops appointing auxiliaries or successors to assist or take over. An early example was set by Bishop Valerius in Possidius's *Life of St Augustine*: 'realising how very infirm he had become through old age, he [...] pleaded the bodily weakness and the weight of his years and asked that Augustine might be consecrated as a bishop'.[113] Willibald's account emphasizes that Willibrord does likewise because he 'grew old and was becoming infirm'.[114] Boniface however, in a letter to the

[109] Letter 51 [63], in Boniface, *The Letters*, trans. by Emerton, p. 116.

[110] Asser seems double-edged in his judgement of these men; it was not their fault that old age prevented them from learning, but they 'regretted that they had not applied themselves to such pursuits in their youth'. *Alfred the Great*, trans. by Keynes and Lapidge, p. 110.

[111] *The Old English Life of St Nicholas*, ed. and trans. by Treharne, pp. 83 and 101.

[112] In this he has much in common with much later Middle English writers such as Hoccleve, Caxton, and Osbern Bokenham, who also claim to be enfeebled by old age at around fifty, although there is no evidence to show that this was in fact the case (see Rosenthal, *Old Age in Late Medieval England*, p. 96). On Lydgate's and Hoccleve's conception of the life cycle, see also Karen Smyth's article in this volume.

[113] Possidius, 'The Life of St Augustine', trans. by Hoare, p. 40.

[114] Willibald, 'The Life of St Boniface', trans. by Talbot, p. 122.

Pope, emphasizes that Willibrord 'continued preaching up to his feeble old age' but 'appointed an auxiliary bishop as his substitute to carry on his ministry'.[115] Willibald later explains that Boniface himself needed a successor 'because the holy man, owing to his physical infirmities, was not able to attend the synodal assemblies'.[116] Ceolfrith takes similar action in giving up control of the monastery to avoid setting a bad example through infirmity.[117] Yet these holy men do not lose authority by appointing successors or passing the reins to younger men, but remain respected members of their communities. They are not shown as automatically in opposition to the young; rather, they continue to be valued for both their wisdom and their piety.

Boniface, Valerius, and Willibrord are examples of those who, while facing up to their decreasing strength, made adjustments as necessary and continued with life as best they could. Outside of divine help, dealing with old age in a Christian context is linked not to miraculous feats but to an idea which relates physical weakness to spiritual well-being. Frailty and illness are portrayed as a trial of faith and even a welcome distraction from the problematic desires of the body since, as Athanasius has Saint Anthony put it, 'the fibre of the soul is then sound when the pleasures of the body are diminished'.[118] The idea was centred around two key biblical verses expressed by Saint Paul: that strength is made perfect in weakness through the grace of Christ, and that it is when one is physically weak that one gains spiritual strength. These are found in the Vulgate of II Corinthians 12, verses 9 ('nam virtus in infirmitate perficitur') and 10 ('cum enim infirmor tunc potens sum'). Both emphasize how 'infirmity' or weakness is actually an opportunity for spiritual strength and virtue to grow,[119] and show that it is the power of Christ that operates in the infirm; strength is firmly aligned with Christ, and weakness with his human followers. However, the use of these verses by Anglo-Saxon writers shows a subtle change of emphasis at times, so that *virtus* refers to the indvidual's spiritual strength rather than that of Christ. Hence, among the letters of Boniface, one apparently from Lullus to Sigebald encourages the latter: 'You may say with joyful satisfaction in the words of the Apostle Paul: "When I am weak, then am I strong", and "My strength is made perfect in weakness."

[115] Letter 89 [109], in Boniface, *The Letters*, trans. by Emerton, p. 182.

[116] Willibald, 'The Life of St Boniface', trans. by Talbot, p. 133.

[117] *Anonymous Life of St Ceolfrith*, ed. and trans. by Whitelock, p. 702.

[118] Athanasius, *Vita S. Antoni*, ed. by Schaff and Wace, p. 199.

[119] See also 'igitur gloriabor in infirmitatibus meis' (I Corinthians 12. 9) and 'placeo mihi in infirmitatibus' (I Corinthians 12. 10).

Frailty of the body is strength of the spirit'.[120] Lullus's addition of the word 'my' makes the strength Paul's or Sigebald's and the sentiment directly relevant to Sigebald's own reactions to his physical state. Boniface uses the same references in an attempt to hearten Bishop Daniel of Winchester who has become blind, and again to Abbess Bugga; to Daniel he adds 'I believe, trusting in your wisdom and patience, that God has sent this trial for the perfecting of your strength'.[121] The appropriation of *virtus* makes of Paul's verses a deliberate reversal of the expectations associated with ageing, and this realignment of priorities in a Christian context allows the elderly to be more than purveyors of wisdom. They are the spiritually robust members of any community, and what appears to inconvenience them most is in fact what makes them strongest. Like the warriors in *The Battle of Maldon*, they must learn to rely on the spiritual 'as their strength lessens', and it is tempting to wonder whether this idea in fact underlies Byrhtwold's last words of advice: 'Mind must be the more hardy, heart the keener, spirit must be the greater as our strength lessens.' Unlike those warriors however, for men like Boniface, Daniel, and Sigebald this is the culmination of their lives and roles rather than a diminishing of them.

We can thus conclude that the conceptual structures which underlie ideas of old age in this period are concerned with changing priorities. These are inherent in various different social and cultural contexts; the question of how the aged can adapt and be adapted to is a fundamental part of the heroic tradition as well. The association of age with wisdom in more than one Old English literary genre ensures that there is no simple correlation between physical decay and moral decay, or a lessening of virtues, in the older man; age may in fact be a marker of wisdom and understanding which requires respect. This imposed role of sage, however, is dependent upon an understanding that old age cannot be defeated and an acceptance of the fact that old men cannot play the same parts in society that they have been accustomed to earlier in life. This may lead to particular difficulty in a heroic society where their status as advisors cannot match their former glory as warriors. Yet in a Christian context, their weakness can be represented as spiritual strength, and this strength used as a means to maintain authority, showing how such changing priorities might be figured.

The saints' *Lives* show very specific portrayals of ageing. Despite acknowledgements that even saints may be somewhat hindered by age, they can emphasize the connection between sanctity and long life, in which divine assistance enables individuals to overcome their natural physical limitations. The miraculous com-

[120] Lullus in Letter 28 [37], in Boniface, *The Letters*, trans. by Emerton, p. 66.

[121] Letter 77 [94], in Boniface, *The Letters*, trans. by Emerton, p. 171; Letter 51 [63], pp. 116–17.

pensation of the ageing process relies upon a correlating knowledge of the depredation of age, contrasting saintly senectitude with secular, but there are glimpses of what might constitute 'good old age' for those outside the monasteries as well. Saints' *Lives* allow for a shift of emphasis away from decay to renewal; the appearance of the saints in death reminds readers of the promise of resurrected, heavenly bodies in an eternal life where no ageing takes place at all.

It is interesting to note that in all this there is little sign of the snuffles of Byrhtferth's chilly and sluggish old men. While the natural cycle against which the life cycle is read suggests the possibility that they will exhibit these features, there is a great deal of flexibility in the ways in which old age is experienced and figured in Anglo-Saxon texts. Perhaps ironically, it is the heroic model which seems most affiliated to the negative implications of the life cycle, simply because heroic status is so strongly based on physical prowess. Since Christianity emphasizes the importance of the spiritual instead throughout the life cycle, there is potential for the elderly to outperform the young and thus reverse the negative oppositions which seem built into the cycle.

Byrhtferth's firm location of the ages of man within the context of a balanced natural world controlled and ordered by God foregrounds the fact that all the states from birth to death are natural in a fallen world. But the world and the men who inhabit it are part of another scheme as well, that of salvation, which will eventually bring an end to all these cycles, as Christian Anglo-Saxons were aware. Hence, King Alfred's Old English translation of Augustine's *Soliloquies* adds a lengthy passage on natural cycles — those of the seasons, stars, and so on —noting that in some instances the cycle continues by replacing old with new. Yet, as he explains, for man there is hope for a final end to the prospect of inevitable decay since

> ge furþum manna lichaman forealdiað, swa swa oðre gescæftas ealdiað; ac swa swa hy ær wurðlicor lybbað þonne treowu oðþe oðre nytenu, swa hy eac weorðfulicor arisað on domes dæge, swa þæt nefre syððan þa lichaman ne geendiað ne ne forealdiað.
>
> [even the bodies of men grow very old, just as other created things grow old; but just as they live in a more worthy manner beforehand than trees or other animals, so also they will arise more worthily on the Day of Judgement, so that never afterwards will these bodies either end or grow very old.][122]

Christianity does not simply promise Anglo-Saxons a life without end after death; it promises them an eternal life without old age.

[122] *King Alfred's Old English Version of St. Augustine's Soliloquies*, ed. by Hargrove, p. 10.

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Imagining Age in the Fifteenth Century: Nation, Everyman, and the Self

Karen Smyth

While descriptions of age in late Middle English texts can appear to operate in somewhat stereotypical fashion, on closer reading strikingly distinctive artistic markings can be detected. This study compares literary imaginings of a range of different life-cycle scales: the historical life cycle of a nation, of Everyman's journey through life, and of the life cycle of a named individual. At the heart of these comparisons lies the question as to whether or not descriptions of youth or maturity operate in similar or different fashions according to the scale of the life cycle.[1] Fifteenth-century poems and dramatic spectacles are selected because these works are from the close of the Middle Ages and mark continuity and change between what are commonly deemed 'medieval' and 'modern' views of time.[2] The scale of the life cycle and the generic form in which it is expressed, however, are not the only context-dependent specificities of which one must remain aware: sensitivity to individual authors' artistry is also required, as is understanding of the range of reading strategies that medieval readers and spectators employed.

[1] For an illuminating survey of this practice of comparing different scales of life cycles, see Archambault, 'The Ages of Man and the Ages of the World'.

[2] The changing trajectory of reception of fifteenth-century literature can be seen no more clearly than when comparing Johan Huizinga's assertion of the century as being the Autumn of the Middle Ages to James Simpson's recent magisterial study of the tendency in the late medieval period to mix and conflate tradition and innovation that, he asserts — and most contemporary scholars now agree — produced a truly transformative reformation. See Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, trans. by Hopman, and Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution*.

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One such reading strategy is when multiple scales of life cycles are invoked by permitting multiple coexisting age referents to play dynamic roles. Hybrid imaginings of age states and of ageing processes are celebrated and embraced, acting as a hallmark feature of these texts. One genre that seeks to draw attention to amalgams of meanings is the riddle, where ideas, images, and meanings merge and can act as multiple signifiers.[3]

> [It] hath no power to stonde, go nor fle;
> And afftirward, yiff it be weel souht,
> Goth first on foure, and ellis goth he nouht:
> Afftir bi processe, on thre, and thanne on tweyne;
> And eft ageyn, as nature doth ordeyne,
> He goth on thre and efft on foure ageyn,
> Off kindly riht nature disposith it so.
> And in a while it folwith in certeyn,
> To the mateer which that he cam fro.[4]

> [It has no ability to stand, move, or flee. Afterwards, if all is well, it begins to go on four. After that the next stage is on three, and then on two. Then, as nature ordains, it often goes again on three and then on four. This is the natural rule of nature. And eventually it returns to the matter from which it came.]

This Greek riddle, recited by John Lydgate in his fifteenth-century moral tragedy the *Fall of Princes*, presents the cycle of life.[5] It is tempting to gloss over this as an obvious statement concerning the ages of man, but it discloses much more: it illustrates succinctly the medieval tendency to play with the pluralities that age descriptions permit. For instance, this can be seen to be about either the life cycle of an individual character (Oedipus) or that of Everyman. The nature of the reply, when Oedipus resolves the riddle, also raises questions as to whether life-cycle referents are objective and subjective, quantitative and qualitative, and if there are wider ramifications and implications concerning the ageing of a nation. This essay

[3] For an overview of the artistic fascination with the riddle in this period, see Galloway, 'The Rhetoric of Riddling'.

[4] Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, I, ll. 3384–92, p. 93.

[5] The exact source text is unknown, but what is clear is that Lydgate presents a much fuller version of the riddle in comparison to most of his contemporaries, and he embellishes details not in Sophocles. Useful surveys of how the riddle of the Sphinx has held fascination for so long can be found in Edmunds, *The Sphinx in the Oedipus Legend*; and Weiss, *How Culture Influences Interpretation of the Riddle of the Sphinx*. Of particular relevance to its treatment in the medieval period, see Edmunds, 'Oedipus in the Middle Ages'.

demonstrates that such questions, and more specifically the dynamic interrelations between them, hold the key to understanding fifteenth-century imaginings of age.

In providing an answer to the riddle, Oedipus slightly but significantly embellishes each stage of life:

> [It] is first a child, which may nat suffise,
> What it is born, the trouthe is alday seene,
> Withouten helpe hymseluen to susteene.
>
> Afftir on foure he naturali doth kreepe,
> For inpotence and greene tendirnesse,
> Norices can telle that doon hem keepe.
> But afftirward, vp he doth hym dresse
> With hist too feet; the thridde to expresse,
> Is hand or bench or support off sum wall
> To hold hym vp, list he cachche a fall
>
> And afftirward encresyng off his might,
> To greeter age whan he doth atteyne,
> Off his nature thane he goth vpriht,
> Mihtili vpon his leggis tweyne.
> Thanne kometh age his power to restryne,
> Crokid and lame, lik as me may see,
> With staff or potent to make up leggis thre.
>
> But whan feeblesse or siknesse doon assaile,
> On feet and handis he must bowe & lowe;
> For crossed potentis may nat thane auaile,
> Whan lusti age is banished & shet oute.
> Thanne efft ageyn, heeroff may be no doute,
> With four feet terthe he doth retourne
> For whens he cam, the stille to soiourne.[6]

[It is first a child, which is not self-sufficient when first born, and would not survive without help. Afterwards he crawls on all fours, is incontinent and green in childhood. Next he stands up on two feet with the aid of his third limb, his hand, on a wall or bench to hold him up for support in case he falls. And afterwards as he develops greater strength, he stands upright with great stature on his two legs.

[6] Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, I, ll. 3382–95, pp. 93–94. Lydgate provides even more detailed (though similar) embellishments of the riddle of the sphinx in his poem *Siege of Thebes*: Lydgate, *Siege of Thebes*, ed. by Erdman and Ekwall, ll. 659–78, pp. 29–30 and ll. 699–736, pp. 31–32.

> Then age affects him and restrains his power, making him crooked and lame, and we see he uses a staff or stick like a third leg. But when frailty and sickness strikes, on his hands and feet he buckles. For any walking aid is of no avail when lusty age is banished and thrown out. Then, there is no doubt, that the final stage is when he returns to the earth from whence he came to remain forever more.]

At first glance, there appears to be a focus on the physical aspects of ageing as we move from infant helplessness to adult maturity and then to sickness in old age. Key adjectives, however, such as 'greene tendirnesse', 'feeblesse', and 'lusti age', could refer to personality traits as much as to physical abilities. It is by no accident that the only character who manages to solve this riddle of the sphinx, thereby saving his own life and that of the nation, is Oedipus. He recognizes the linear progression of states of time yet, paradoxically, also their cyclical nature. His resolution of the Sphinx's puzzle foreshadows the resolution of his own identity. Until his succession as King, his life has progressed in episodic stages: he is abandoned as a child, reared in humble surroundings, goes on a journey, and lives in Thebes. After solving the riddle he lives for some years in Thebes as the new king, married to the widowed Queen Jocasta, and has two sons. Then his wife recalls the birth of her first child and the slaying of her first husband and Oedipus 'fonde out wel, be reknyng of his life | that she was both his moder and his wyf'.[7] The subsequent insanity — or lameness and sickness — that Oedipus falls into is due not simply to his awareness of his patricidal and incestuous actions, but also to his understanding of how he has disrupted the norms of both linear succession and the natural cycle of generations. Thus the riddle has specific resonance for the individual Oedipus, yet it also has a moral lesson for Everyman: the lesson being the need to understand the present as a product of causal rather than episodic relationships with the past.

Simultaneously, the riddle holds meaning for the unpropitious, inescapable, destructive rhythms of recursive history that Theban history signifies[8] (of which Oedipus's journey is only one small part). Certain phrases in Oedipus's response such as 'cachche a fall' and 'he doth retourne' reinforce this notion with moral echoes of the Christian narrative of the Fall of Man. What follows next in Lydgate's text is a digression on Solomon's proverb of the Wheel of Fortune and then a veritable feast of exemplars, of individual kings and rulers who began in humble origins, rose in power and repute, but then became physically and mor-

[7] Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, 1, l. 988, p. 42.

[8] Robert R. Edwards provides a useful overview of the variety of medieval versions of Theban history: Edwards, 'Medieval Literary Careers'.

ally crippled before dying. This digression invites us to re-evaluate the riddle as a version in miniature of the macroscopic cycle of Fortune that has successfully raised and thrown off its wheel so many key historical figures. In this context, the adjectives used to explain the innocent state of childhood — 'greene tendirnesse' — and the mighty state of manhood — 'lusti' — have subjective undertones of foolish naivety and proud rashness that sow the seeds for downfall.

How we read the riddle depends on whether we regard it as a descriptive foreshadowing of an individual's tragic life, a moral lesson about causality for Everyman, or a means to discuss the cycle of rise and decline in the life history of civilizations. The riddle succinctly shows us that life-cycle markings are inherently dependent upon the context within which they are read.

Time in Large-Scale Life Cycles

Instead of focusing on one sequence of age markings and the range of possible readings that it enables, what happens if the same age referent is examined across a number of different styles of texts? Are the references of young adulthood, middle age, and old age represented in similar or different ways depending on whether the life-cycle scale is that of a nation's or of an individual's life span? What effect do different narrative styles have on the way in which these age states are expressed and function? Comparative close readings follow of the symbolic, descriptive, and structural functions of age schemes in two poems ostensibly examining large-scale life cycles of nations in contrast to two that focus on the life cycle of Everyman. I say 'ostensibly' because on closer examination, such demarcations are not easily maintained. These texts are by the fifteenth-century Benedictine monk and court poet John Lydgate (*c.* 1371–1449).[9] The two poems with epic breadth for consideration are Lydgate's *Troy Book* (composed between 1412 and 1420) and his *Fall of Princes* (composed between 1431 and 1439). The *Troy Book*, a poem of five books, is loosely adapted from Guido delle Colonne's *Historia destructionis Troiae* and commissioned by Henry V.[10] It provides a homiletic survey of the classical history of Troy from its origins in Jason's quest for the Golden Fleece to the heroic battles for Troy and the ultimate downfall of Priam. It ends with the catastrophe that meets the Greeks on their homecoming, with an impassioned plea that the lessons from the past be learnt to ensure stability

[9] For a comprehensive introduction to Lydgate and his poetry, see Pearsall, *John Lydgate*.

[10] For an overview of the context of translation within which Lydgate works, see Thompson, 'Transmission of Troy Stories to the Middle Ages'.

and peace in the future. Meanwhile, the *Fall of Princes* (across some 36,365 lines of verse ordered in nine books) is an adaptation of Laurent de Premierfait's 1409 French translation of Giovanni Boccaccio's Latin prose work *De casibus virorum illustrium* (which was composed between 1355 and 1360, with modifications in 1377). Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* was commissioned by a regular patron of the poet: Humphrey, duke of Gloucester.[11] This elegiac, and at times somewhat opinionated, poem relates nearly five hundred examples of legendary figures, beginning with Adam and Eve and ending in the fourteenth century with King John of France, as a means to advise princes on how to rule benevolently and justly. All the figures have succumbed to the transitory nature of life, falling from power and grace due either to the caprice of Lady Fortune or by their own failings. The *Fall of Princes*, while akin to the *Troy Book* in being a large-scale exemplary poem, is stylistically very different. The *Troy Book* presents a chronological journey always driving towards the climactic denouement of the fall of Troy through a specific historical span. In contrast, in the *Fall of Princes* while we move in a linear fashion from biblical times to recent historical times, the linearity is downplayed in the encyclopaedic collection of narratives. Instead we have a more cyclical, recurring sense of similar virtues and vices across the times that are conveyed: more attention is drawn to the fact that it presents the edited highlights that reiterate time and time again the successes and failures of mythical figures, biblical rulers, and recent kings. Therefore while both texts cover an extended timescale (the life cycle of the Trojan nation or the even larger scale of Christian history), variations in the functions of similar descriptions of young adulthood and old age reveal just how conscious Lydgate is of how the same type of life-cycle referent can operate in subtly different ways, resulting in variations of historical perspectives.[12]

However, if we accept that the discussion of the riddle above provides a reading strategy for the life-cycle markings in these large-scale texts, this immediately creates a critical dilemma as it suggests that traditional demarcations between 'medieval' and 'modern' time consciousness can, and should, be challenged. This is because texts like the pseudo-historical advisory texts of Lydgate's under inspection here are normally regarded by modern scholars as ones that underscore 'medieval' temporal perceptions. Notions of timelessness and eternity with their insistence on 'universal' moral truths, cyclicality over linearity (which echoes the salvational plan of history), and the episodic over the causal (which

[11] A detailed study of this poem can be found in Mortimer, *John Lydgate's 'Fall of Princes'*.

[12] Paul Strohm explores how 'an attitude toward time is a precondition of narrative, with different conceptions of time encouraging variations in narrative form', and to this study I add this investigation of pseudo-historical epic poetry forms. Strohm, *Social Chaucer*, p. 114.

legitimizes the numerous moral digressions as a mode of narrative unity rather than causal sequences).[13] Such poems are not seen to support 'modern' notions of hybridity and dynamism concerning temporal perspectives. For that reason, it is necessary to begin with a gloss as to why distinctions are commonly made between 'medieval' and 'modern' time views in general. For this we can turn to the well-known twelve-line opening of Geoffrey Chaucer's fourteenth-century poem *The Canterbury Tales*, where the imagining of spring demonstrates a typical form of time description employed by medieval writers.[14] Poetic descriptions of the natural rhythms of time, such as seasonal or diurnal, are used by the writers not simply to locate action in time as a means to create a narrative context. More significantly, the formulaic description acts as an expression of the medieval perception of time as a force which subjects the human to the cyclical and recurring rhythms in nature. The concept of cyclical time perhaps not only best describes the medieval view of time but also highlights why time was perceived in this fashion: it is the perception of time's pattern that best suits the concept of salvational history.

Cyclical time as symbolic of Divine control of time is widely discussed in numerous medieval Latin theological treatises of the *De tempore* type, as well as influencing vernacular texts such as the allegorical fourteenth-century poem *Piers Plowman* and the fifteenth-century mystery and morality plays. Perceptions of the 'divine' influences on time perceptions can clearly be found in the texts of Lydgate addressed here. Events are listed as examples of God's plan, either in the chronological creation to the apocalypse model (as in Lydgate's *Troy Book*), or in the reciprocal model where events are used to illustrate virtues or vices or

[13] See Higgins, 'Medieval Notions of the Structure of Time', for an overview of the critical work done on the widespread permeation in medieval writings of such a concept of salvational history.

[14] 'Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote | The droghte of March hath perced to the roote, | And bathed every veyne in swich licour | Of which vertu engendred is the flour; | Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth | Inspired hath in every holt and heeth | The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne | Hath in the Ram his half cours yronne, | And smale foweles maken melodye, | That slepen al the nyght with open ye | (So priketh hem nature in hir corages), | Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimage' (When April with his sweet smelling showers | Has pierced the drought of March right to the root, | And bathed each vein with liquor of such power | It generates therein and creates the flower; | When the West wind also with his sweet breath, | In every field and wood has urged life into, | The tender shoots and buds, and the young sun | His second half course through the Ram now run, | And little birds are making melody, | And sleep through all the night with eyes open | (So Nature pricks them in their heart) | Then folk long to go on pilgrimages): Chaucer, 'The General Prologue', ll. 1–12, p. 23.

the rewards or just punishments of God (as in his *Fall of Princes*). Such narrative models reconfigure the Christian conception of God's intervention in the time of the world: the unity of selection of episodes is emphasized by the interpretation that history is not a unified process of organic development, but one connected by God's existence from outside human time. Such a time view is qualitative not quantitative, symbolic not empirical, medieval not modern.

Thus a number of post-medieval scholars claim there was, to borrow Ricardo Quinones's words, a 'neglect of time' in the medieval world, due to an apparent lack of temporal consciousness. After all, to create historical contexts events need to be related in temporal sequences, rather than being unified by abstract causes. Quinones expounds:

> in the Middle Ages, this dynamic [time] lay fallow, and as a consequence, the concept of time as we have later come to know it was largely non-existent [...] from the Renaissance, however, within a few minutes one could cite some thirty major works where the sense of time is a central, vital and dynamic concept.[15]

This line of argument purports that an uneasy temporal consciousness emerged only in the sixteenth century when time became an indicator theme for exploring central concerns such as the family, fame, history, and causality.[16]

Yet an apparent juxtaposition seems to be in play here: this reading insists that when life cycles relate to individual figures — such as Oedipus — they are dynamic in structuring the narrative and creating interpretative strategies, but when employed to represent wider timescales (for example, the life cycle of the nation-state in the *Troy Book* or of Christian history in his *Fall of Princes*) they appear to inscribe formulaic patterns of eternal rhythms. Conversely, this essay seeks to show that such a strict demarcation in the function of life-cycle markings is misleading. A distinct borderline between modern and premodern time conceptions fails to acknowledge the variety and complexities of temporal perceptions in the medieval world. There are times in medieval narratives when an acute sense of temporality heightens awareness of time, of specific durations, units, and cycles of life. In other words, the late medieval historical consciousness does at times (in addition to the reconfiguration of Christian conceptions) configure the narration of history in relation to the (medieval) human experience of living within time. An examination of age markings in Lydgate's texts provides a key forum in which to investigate how rhythms of timelessness coexist with temporal

[15] Quinones, 'Four Phases of Time and Literary Movements', p. 122.

[16] A key exponent of this view is Quinones. See also Turner, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Time*, and Waller, *The Strong Necessity of Time*.

rhythms of being in time. Lydgate engages markings of time in life cycles as structural and descriptive narrative framing devices, emphasizing the time of the individual in relation to large-scale times of the state and history: an understanding of the dynamics of micro life cycles enables a re-evaluation of this author's attitudes towards macroscopic patterns of time.

For instance, one type of age referent that consistently plays an integral role in structuring the narrative of the *Fall of Princes* is the date schemes, which act not as descriptive tags of named characters but as divisional markers for episodes of a nation's history.[17] The three ages of man is the most common marker employed, and this is no surprise, for during the Middle Ages the doctrine of the Holy Trinity reinforced the appeal of three. However, there are references made to a much wider range of schemes than there are in the *Troy Book* (where young adulthood and old age are the focus, as discussed later).[18] In the *Fall of Princes*, in addition to the riddle of the sphinx discussed above, the four seasons, four elements, and four directions as relative to the four ages of man are employed throughout the text. The ages of not just man but of the world are also frequently noted. In these ages of the world precise date markings are initially given as biblical years, but by Book II dates are counted by regnal years, and by Book V Roman years are used. Lydgate is not alone in employing a range of referents to demarcate historical ages; in the mid-fifteenth century John Capgrave in his *Abbreuiacion of Cronicles* acknowledges an organizational role for schematic ages. In the preface, Capgrave dwells on the need for his readers to understand the three forms of referents that he uses (the years of the Lord and the regnal years of the Roman Emperors and of the English Kings): 'these reules had in mynde the reder shal more parfitely vndirstand this book'.[19] This explicit acknowledgment of history as a cycle with demarcated divisions is also, as we have seen, invoked by Lydgate in his *Fall of Princes*. The chronicle and the poem share two key features: both chart extended periods of human history, and in order to do so, both create clear temporal divisions in the narrative. However, this shared motif of schematic divisions of a historical life cycle is a sophisticated, context-dependent, and hybrid tech-

[17] For a discussion of how the imaginings of age discussed here relate and interact with a much wider range of time referents in the *Troy Book* and *Fall of Princes* (including seasonal markers, astrological and astronomical referents, lunar, solar, and mechanical reckonings, narrative tense plays, and clock metaphors, among others), see Smyth, *Imaginings of Time*.

[18] On the tripartite division of the life cycle in the early and central Middle Ages, see Cochelin's introduction in this volume. See also Sue Niebrzydowski's essay in this volume on the variety of age referents and schemes available to late medieval authors.

[19] Capgrave, *Abbreuiacion of Cronicles*, ed. by Lucas, p. 8.

nique. What causes variation between texts is the specific historical perspective from which any text is narrated. For instance, the differences in historical models between the *Fall of Princes* and Lydgate's other pseudo-historical text, the *Troy Book*, have key shaping roles on the functions of temporal referents.

But this shared technique of schematic divisions of a historical life cycle is wholly dependent upon the historical perspective narrated. Dating is much more significant in this narrative than in Lydgate's other pseudo-historical text, the *Troy Book*, which is due to its identification as a specific type of historical model. The *Fall of Princes* can be described in Donald Wilcox's structural terms as a reciprocal narrative. In this model key moments of human history illustrate virtues or vices, or the rewards or just punishments of God.[20] Adopting Lee Patterson's terms to describe varying medieval attitudes towards historiography, one could be tempted to argue that the *Fall of Princes* is a compilation, which like the earlier monastic chronicles involves providential intervention in the narration of history. Whereas the *Troy Book* represents an alternative model, with it being an aristocratic history with a concern to provide secular and causal historiography.[21]

A closer study of each of these texts in turn reveals how the temporal stages in a nation's life cycle vary according to the historical emphasis on circularity or causality. Lydgate draws attention to the unity of his *Fall of Princes* narration in such terms by commenting on the narrative interruptions, on how his moral envoys expound the virtues or vices of the tragedies that have been illustrated:

> I sholde in eueri tragedie,
> Afftir the processe made mencioun,
> At the eende sette a remedie,
> With a lenvoie conueied be resoun,
> And afftir that, with humble affecioun
> To noble pryncis lowli it directe,
> Bi others falling [thei myth] themsilff correcte.[22]

[20] See Wilcox, *The Development of Florentine Humanist Historiography*, for a detailed discussion of reciprocal and chronological narrative models. Other terms such as *aeternitas* and *tempus* have been employed to distinguish between extratemporal and episodic narrative forms. Strohm, *Social Chaucer*, pp. 110–43, provides a detailed account of the variations between and within these forms.

[21] Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, p. 96.

[22] Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, II, ll. 148–54, p. 204. While the overall effect is a repetitive and reaffirming structure, the lessons learnt in some of the envoys do not always correlate to the narrative told. Maura Nolan notes that 'it fails its task of moralization at key junctures, not least because Lydgate is himself a kind of literary critic, a poet who reads multiple versions of the stories he reproduces and attempts to do justice to them all, despite

[I will at the end of every tragedy
After the story make a mention
Of the concluding remedy,
In an envoy conceived with wisdom,
It will be indicated to noble princes
How by others' downfall they might correct themselves.]

Such narratives reconfigure the Christian conception of God's intervention in the time of the world: the unity in selection of episodes represents the interpretation that history is not a unified process of organic development, but one connected by God's existence from outside human time. This is the interpretation of Saint Augustine's view of history where he sees every event in history worth narrating as being a process of selecting the significant moments of the past that are related to the paramount moment in human experience of time, the Incarnation.[23] What is of importance is not the sequence of action but the selection of episodes.[24]

The character of the life-cycle markings that demarcate such selections of episodes is worth noting. At the start of Book 1, Lydgate highlights that selection is the basis for his narration, that it is the organizing principle for his work. In the description of the first age of the world he simply notes that 'in whiche space, who that considieth weel, | ther be no thyngis write in special'.[25] The only detail given of the first age of human history is its duration: 'bi turning off the heuene, | a thousand yeer seuene hundrid and elleuene'.[26] A mere seven lines later the date of the human race is noted as 'a thousand foure hundrid & fourteen'.[27] Such quantified precision of duration together with a similarly fixed moment in time provides clearly delineated stages, that of the first age from Adam to Nimrod[28] and the second from the time of Cadmus.[29] Attention is directed not so much towards the stages but on defining one period as distinct from the other on the criteria of when 'notable' or 'historical' events for narration can be found.[30]

the contradictions and inconsistencies by which they are surrounded': Nolan, "'Now Wo, Now Gladnesse'", p. 531.

[23] Maxfield, 'Divine Providence, History and Progress'.

[24] For a discussion of the narrative variations, see Mortimer, *John Lydgate's 'Fall of Princes'*.

[25] Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, 1, ll. 1457–58, p. 40.

[26] Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, 1, ll. 1455–56, p. 40.

[27] Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, 1, l. 1463, p. 41.

[28] Nimrod was the grandson of Ham, the great-grandson of Noah, Genesis 10. 10.

[29] In Greek, Roman, and Phoenician mythology, Cadmus was brother of Europa and founder of the Greek city of Thebes.

[30] Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, 1, l. 1460, p. 41.

Nevertheless, the envoys in the *Fall of Princes* do not create seamless continuity due to the fact that they continually interrupt any chronological narration; but in this context disruptive chronology is not a weakness because the narrative is concerned with presenting a cross-section of ages, not a sequence. It is tempting, however, in accepting such fixed and sweeping labels — chronological or reciprocal modes — to ignore Lydgate's artistic merits in his time narration. After all, as Lydgate emphasizes in the prologue, the *Fall of Princes* places great precedence on the fact that it is 'a chronycle or histoire' composed by the agency of a poet as a means to justify the selection of significant moments that have been narrated.[31] Temporal narration may be frustrated by unifiers (by the moral digressions and rhetorical amplifications), but it does not result in a 'neglect of time', as illustrated in the structural techniques of creating notable historical ages.

Thus the influences of the ages of the world on the narrative structure and sequence is episodic and selective in the *Fall of Princes* but, as shown below, is causal and sequential in the *Troy Book*, which illustrates how central a concept time is in Lydgate's work. In addition, a comparative examination of small-scale life cycles (of individual characters rather than of periods of history) in the *Troy Book* and *Fall of Princes* reveals another variation in emphasis and approach in the use of age schemes between these texts. It also reveals how crucial an understanding of the interrelations between these micro and macro usages of the life cycles can be to a reading Lydgate's historiography. For example, in the *Troy Book*, the description of Jason as 'the yonge, fresche, the lusty man'[32] could be taken from anywhere in the narrative, for without exception there is a formulaic indication of age in every character description.[33] In the text age is not conveyed by quantified units, but by stereotypical medieval age-schemes. The frequently used phrase 'the yonge, fresche, the lusty man' is not concerned with fundamental aspects of time as continual flux: it is not used to provide an individual sense of a character's identity. The only time when identity is signified by the age referent is when gender distinctions are made between adjectival descriptions of the masculine state of young adulthood (as being vigorous, bright, and sometimes inexperienced) and the adjectives employed to describe the feminine state of young adulthood (as being innocent, chaste, beautiful, and sometimes

[31] See Evans and others, 'The Notion of Vernacular Theory', for a discussion of the Middle English views of poetic translation as a subjective process of selection.

[32] Lydgate, *Troy Book*, ed. by Bergen, I, l. 1380, p. 52. Jason is the Greek mythological figure who led the Argonauts and was successful in the quest for the Golden Fleece.

[33] This image of youth is the one that the head of the Tucher family so desires for his son; see Christian Kuhn's essay in this volume.

vulnerable).[34] There are no exceptions to these characteristics to be found in any of the character descriptions. Time is neglected, for life is presented as perpetual states — young adulthood, middle age, and old age — that are changeless. Lydgate adopts the most basic scheme, that of the three ages. Such a design is fitting in this context, where he desires to make generalized references to age states (rather than employing the other more complex and detailed schemes of the physiological theory of four, historian's theory of six, or astrologer's theory of seven ages).[35] Lydgate is like most ancient and medieval writers who, John Burrow notes, 'speak of the course of human life not as a process of continuous development but as a series of transits from one distinct stage to another', with each stage containing 'a certain stable set of characteristics'.[36] From this perspective the age indicators initially appear to be operating as no more than descriptive tags. They certainly do not appear to act as dynamic devices in progressing complex characterization, motivation, or plot. That is to say, they appear to act in a descriptive way rather than the distinctively structural role that other time markings (such as seasonal, astronomical, or liturgical referents) tend to have in the *Troy Book*.

Yet significantly, when these abbreviated and frequent references to formulaic age states are examined alongside the more detailed, varied, but less frequent age descriptions in the *Fall of Princes*, an interesting variation in the function of such referents emerges. In the first four of the five books that comprise the *Troy Book* there are an abundant number of references to the state of young adulthood but only two to middle age. The first is in Dares's description of Diomede's 'mydel age'.[37] The second is when Pyrrhus lies to his son and we are told all become aware, those of 'olde & yonge and of mydel age'.[38] In Books I to IV there are also relatively few

[34] The nature of the source under scrutiny here dictates the need for such gendered stereotypes (as the above argument goes on to illustrate); for those wishing to read more in relation to the hybrid nature of female identity in the state of youthful adulthood, see Lewis, Menuge, and Phillips, *Young Medieval Women*; and for a study of how defining life-cycle roles and identities are not always gender related, see Parsons and Wheeler, *Medieval Mothering*.

[35] See Chew, *The Pilgrimage of Life*, for a discussion of the late medieval theories and origins of the three, four, six, and seven divisions in the age of man, which clearly affirm continuity of some of the divisions of the life cycle outlined by Isabelle Cochelin in the introduction to this volume.

[36] Burrow, *The Ages of Man*, p. 178.

[37] Lydgate, *Troy Book*, ed. by Bergen, II, l. 4616, p. 276. Dares of Phrygia was purported to be an eyewitness of the war, fighting on the side of the Trojans. In fact he authored the Latin account entitled *The History of the Destruction of Troy* in about the sixth century, probably drawn from Greek originals. In the Theban tale, Diomedes, lord of Argos, was one of the Greek ambassadors sent to Troy to request Priam to return Helen.

[38] Lydgate, *Troy Book*, ed. by Bergen, V, l. 2472, p. 843. This description has no qualities

references to old age. (Book V is the exception and is discussed later.) In contrast, although not as frequent, references to all three states of adulthood — youth, middle, and old age — are made throughout the *Fall of Princes*. By paying such close attention to Lydgate's craft, we can deduce that several different consequences arise due to this variation. For one, the *Troy Book* has a selective focus on youth whereas the *Fall of Princes* acts as an exploration of all three states. In the first four books of the *Troy Book* it is possible to discern what Burrow describes as 'the cult of youth', which, he comments, 'has been noticed in certain later medieval writers and clearly represents a fundamental characteristic of their new courtly culture, as against an older monastic culture in which the transcendence ideal worked towards a denaturing and devaluation of that particular age'.[39] Thus the descriptive tags are not just simply referring to the state of specific historical characters but, cumulatively, they reflect the courtly culture of the contemporary nation. An image arises of a culture in the flower of manhood, so young, fresh, and courageous, lacking only in a degree of personal prudence due to its 'tender years.

This is not to say that the *Fall of Princes*, which Lydgate began writing some twenty years after the commencement of the *Troy Book*, reverts and employs the older monastic tradition of 'denaturing and devaluing' youth as a means to focus on ideals of eternity. Instead, the *Fall of Princes* is one of those texts from later in the Middle Ages that 'reflects a renewed sense of the rich and various order of nature in which *every age of life*, and not least youth, can claim its legitimate place' (my italics).[40] Time is a central principle of concern in the *Fall of Princes*: it is no accident that Lydgate should in the opening book create a rich, merciless identity for time when he asserts that 'tyme with his rasour hath doon so gret vengeance'.[41] He establishes his interest in not just ideals of transcendence, but also in the effects of time, in time as a process of dissolution: 'kam tyme vpon,

that are unique to middle age. Rather it mixes the usual attributes of youth and old age simultaneously but with a notable exception. The youthful features of strength and bravery are not accompanied with a reference to innocence, implying the loss of innocence as a specific feature of middle age. This notion that progression into adulthood invokes a moral journey, where interior reflection rather than outward physical state is often the key marker of middle age, is in keeping with Deborah Youngs's findings in her essay in this volume.

[39] Burrow, *The Ages of Man*, p. 189.

[40] Burrow, *The Ages of Man*, p. 189.

[41] Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, I, l. 1437, p. 40. This image appears to have direct links with the 'modern' one of the grim reaper with a scythe, but does in fact originate from the Roman deity of time, Chronos, and in the Middle Ages the image of a skeletal figure (invoking the ancient tradition of Saturn's decrepit body signifying the inexorable flow of time) with a scythe and hourglass was commonplace. See Brown and Butcher, *The Age of Saturn*.

and bi processe off yeeris | ther memory hath duskid and ther mynde'.[42] The *Fall of Princes*, through the employment of many more 'rich and various' adjectives for all three states, investigates the conformities and also limitations of human nature in the natural state of the three ages. With the first age, while the 'yonge, fresche, the lusty' state of youth is often presented as it was in the *Troy Book*, there are many descriptions that present very different perceptions of youth, and certainly not those that would be promoted in the 'cult of youth'.[43] For example, youth is described as encouraging 'fals auoutri', as being full of 'foli' and 'presumpcioun', as 'hasty' causing destruction, 'onbridled', and while the phrase 'lusti youthe' in the *Troy Book* always denotes the vigour and vitality of youth, by contrast, in the *Fall of Princes*, it signifies impetuosity, one of the limitations of Phaedra that leads to her suicide.[44] The immorality of youth is even one of the subjects of Lydgate's moral digressions from the narrative:

> The play off youthe folk calle it lecherie,
> Seyn that it is a gamen off Nature,
> And to sustene and bern vp ther partie,
> How it sit weel, be record off scriptures,
> Onto euerich liffli creature
> That stant in helthe and is coraoius,
> Off verrai kynde for to be lecherous.[45]
>
> [The play of youth people call lechery,
> Claiming that it is a game of Nature,
> And to sustain and maintain the party,
> That it occurs in, by record of the scriptures,
> Every living creature
> That stands in health and is courageous
> In various ways is in nature lecherous.]

[42] Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, I, ll. 1443–44, p. 40.

[43] For more discussions concerning the characteristic ideals and realities of young male adulthood in such a 'cult', see Karras, *From Boys to Men*; and Cohen and Wheeler, *Becoming Male in the Middle Ages*.

[44] Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, I, l. 2830, p. 77; II, l. 681, p. 218; II, l. 785, p. 221; II, l. 1129, p. 231; I, l. 2865, p. 78. In Greek mythology Phaedra is married to Theseus, and various versions of her death existed. Lydgate narrates the story of when she fell in love with Theseus's son, Hippolytus, but tells her husband that his son raped her, upon which Theseus kills Hippolytus, leading Phaedra to commit suicide as she had not intended Hippolytus's death.

[45] Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, III, ll. 1198–1204, p. 362.

Meanwhile, throughout the *Fall of Princes*, numerous references to middle age as the 'flouryng' of age contrast sharply to the employment of middle age only twice in the *Troy Book*. In the *Fall of Princes* we even find a quantification of when this middle state occurs: 'parfitt off age as man of thretti yeer'.[46] Middle age is frequently described as the state where prudence, fresh courage, and excelling manhood occur. (Interestingly, there are no references to female middle-aged characters, despite female figures accounting for almost half of those allocated an age throughout the text.) While there may be multiple references to middle age in this text, there is only one made to adolescence.[47] It is at the close of the final book, where Lydgate comments on the parent–child relationship:

> Fader and moder be disposicioun
> To cherisshe ther children & eke feede
> Til seuene yeer passe, lawe maketh mencioun,
> As thei are bounde of nature and resound.
> That tyme passed, ther tendirnesse tenclyne
> Unto fourtene to virtuous discipline.
>
> Than afterward in ther adolescence,
> Vertuousli to teche hem & chastise,
> Norissh hem in doctryn & science,
> Fostre in vertu vices to despise,
> To be curteis, sad, prudent & wise;
> For whan thei gynne with vertu in that age,
> Gladli aftir, thei do non outrage.[48]
>
> [A father and mother's disposition
> is to cherish their children and also feed them
> for seven years, as noted in law.
> As time passes their tenderness
> is given until the age of fourteen
> when they will be virtuously trained.
>
> Then afterwards, in their adolescence,
> they are to virtuously teach them and chastise,
> nourish them in doctrine and science,
> foster them to despise vices,
> to be courteous, humble, prudent, and wise.

[46] Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, I, l. 505, p. 14.

[47] See Jessie Sherwood's and Isabelle Cochelin's discussions of adolescence in this volume.

[48] Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, IX, ll. 1759–71, pp. 968–69.

> Because when they develop virtue in that age
> then happily afterwards they do no outrage.]

The period of adolescence, totally absent in the *Troy Book*, is the final focus of this extensive poem. It is hailed as the formative educative period in secular arts, but perhaps more significantly also the formative age for moral awareness. The *Troy Book* focuses on young adulthood, where the consequences of parental guidance in the adolescent age are under scrutiny. What this closing focus on the life cycle does in the *Fall of Princes* is to emphasize our need to be aware of the causal connections with familial reverence and abuse, with the past and present, with the youthful formative stages of both life and nature of older age, as well as the effects of one generation upon another. The lesson that Oedipus learns so early on in the narrative is again reiterated, this time rather more pointedly, to encourage readers to learn from the narrative, the lesson being that the connection of the end is to the start, the future is with the past.

As for old age, the descriptions in the *Fall of Princes* use a wide range of referents and significantly are indicated throughout all nine books, implying a sustained and synchronic interest in the state of old age with the other ages.[49] These descriptions frequently include invocations of poverty, feebleness, shame, lameness, lack of might, and the loss of worthiness and social position. We are told the cause of these infirmities in old age is occasioned by Adam in the Garden of Eden (when, we are told he is in middle age) and his 'synne brouht in shame | Man to be feeble and feynt in his passage | And be processe to waxen halt and lame'.[50] Yet, paradoxically, there are also numerous descriptions of old age where positive attributes are indicated, as in the description of the seven princes who attack Oropastes, who was 'prudent and manli and off yeris olde'.[51]

It is clear that the *Fall of Princes* involves a much more detailed examination of the rich and various natures of the three ages of man. There are even moments where strict demarcations between the ages conflate, as in the description of the goddess Nasica who laboured for the commonweal of Rome: she was 'old of discrecioun & but yong of yeeris'.[52] This sustained interest in the varieties within ages and of different age states in the *Fall of Princes* invites us to reconsider the

[49] See Philippa Semper's discussion, in this volume, of the hybridity and versatility that can be found in markings of old age.

[50] Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, I, ll. 702–04, p. 20.

[51] Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, II, l. 1788, p. 378. Oropastes was one of the Persian magi.

[52] Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, V, l. 1783, p. 635.

descriptive functions of the age references in the *Troy Book*. Do they act as simple descriptive indicators of two cross-sections of time, of youth and then in Book v of old age? Are they employed simply in order to create a positive reflection of contemporary court culture, or can they be seen to have an additional role? On closer inspection we see that the *Troy Book*'s references to youth occur before not only every character description, but also often indicate the nature of collective groups, such as in the description of the Greeks as 'so yong, so fresche, so hardy [...] so strong'.[53] The age descriptions of both individual characters and collective groups always precede the progression of narrative action, suggesting that these age tags are not merely descriptive but that they also have a framing role for forthcoming narrative action. Hence, whomsoever the cult of youth is conveyed upon is an indicator of whom the narrative episode is to favour. One such narrative incident is when 'ful pitousli trembling, Quakyng for age and lak of myth | Ther gret feeblesse be signes out shewyng'.[54] The Greeks are described as a small group of seven thousand before we are told that armed Trojans have taken horse, ridden out, and are waiting with their one hundred thousand strong army. It should not, however, be any surprise when, 157 lines later, the less equipped and smaller army of Greeks forces the Trojans 'backward to resort' behind their lines, for it was the Greeks who had the cult of youth on their side.[55] No age indicators had been offered for the Trojans. This is a pattern repeated throughout the *Troy Book* in the many battle scenes, where the age indicator frames the outcome of who in the narrative is to succeed; the age referent has a dynamic and vital role in structuring the pattern of the narrative.

Another look at the state of old age reveals one more striking variation between these texts.[56] In both decay, of some form or another, is characterized as having been caused by time acting as an agent of destruction. A distinction, however, can be made between the use of relative time in the *Fall of Princes*. Where the process of decay is used in order to describe the nature of other states, of characters, events, or objects and the *Troy Book*'s narrative in Book v, where time itself becomes the subject (where the destructive effects of time act as commentary upon the forceful nature of time). Throughout the *Fall of Princes*, as in the recording of biblical history of Adam and Eve's state after their child Cain slays his brother Abel,

[53] Lydgate, *Troy Book*, ed. by Bergen, II, l. 8072, p. 375.

[54] Lydgate, *Troy Book*, ed. by Bergen, I, ll. 478–79, p. 14.

[55] Lydgate, *Troy Book*, ed. by Bergen, I, l. 8229, p. 380.

[56] The complexities and different nuances in the representations of old age in the late medieval period are also discussed in Covey, 'Old Age Portrayed by the Ages-of-Life Models', and in Rosenthal, *Old Age in Late Medieval England*.

the effects of time do not simply describe the condition of the characters but act as motifs for other states.[57] The description of Adam and Eve dwells on old age, emphasizing the loss of basic faculties and the beauty of youth. Yet the destructive nature of time is not the subject of the narrative; rather it acts as a conceit for the loss of innocence and the consequent suffering that humanity has to endure: 'that neuer man hadde liberte, | sithen that Adam our Lord gan disobeye'.[58]

In the *Troy Book* there is an additional function that images of old age have in the narrative. The accumulative presentation of the destructive effects of time in the final book is amplified in the descriptions of many ageing characters, where fears are expressed about the destructive process of time, proffering prudence as an alternative to Fortune's insistence upon the temporality of life with the survivors of the Trojan War establishing alliances in the generation that follows them. These indicators of old age do not solely describe the nature of characters or situations, but portray a perception of time itself. The state of old age is not used simply as a tool for character description in Book V; time, specifically the destructive process of time, becomes the subject. This is expressed by Atastus when he laments: 'how thorough age now I am brought lowe'.[59] This fear of the encroaching passage of time is also illustrated by Pelleus.[60] In the final book he is in his 'castel olde and ruinous' and is 'ful of sorwe and care [...] drede of deth day & nyght [...] disespeired in his vnwedly age'.[61] In sharp contrast, Pelleus in his youthful prime as King of Thessaly is described in Book I as 'wys & discrete & also virtuous'.[62] New old-aged characters are not introduced in Book V; the effects of time are indicated in those characters that were once youthful and active in the narrative. Old age is not presented as a separate, static state, coexisting with the other ages of man, as in the *Fall of Princes*, but as the product of time's passage. Lydgate draws attention to the association between the breakdown of order and structure and the loss of youth in Book V, brought about by the decay of time.

[57] See Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, I, ll. 750–73, pp. 21–22.

[58] Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, I, ll. 782–83, p. 22.

[59] Lydgate, *Troy Book*, ed. by Bergen, V, l. 2624, p. 847. Atastus's two sons, Polisthenes and Menalippus, are killed by Pyrrhus: in this narrative, future generations as well as Atastus's own lifespan are terminated.

[60] Robert R. Edwards observes that 'Lydgate conflates Pelias, the devious uncle of Jason, with Peleus, King of Phthia, who married the sea nymph Thetis, upon whom he fathered Achilles': Lydgate, *Troy Book: Selections*, ed. by Edwards, bk I, n. 3.

[61] Lydgate, *Troy Book*, ed. by Bergen, V, ll. 2364–67, p. 840.

[62] Lydgate, *Troy Book*, ed. by Bergen, I, l. 4, p. 12.

In Lydgate's closing remarks in Book v of the *Troy Book*, time is presented as a state that fades. One could therefore assume that the narrative has been concerned with what Burrow describes as 'the transcendence ideal',[63] which has traditionally been deemed as a 'medieval' time view:

> As in this boke exaumple ye shal fynde
> yif that the list & enprente it in your mynde –
> How al passeth and halt here no soiour,
> Wastyng a-way as doth a somer flour,
> Riche and pore, of euery maner age:
> For oure lyf here is but a pilgrimage.[64]

It is, however, precisely what is usually deemed as a 'modern' time view — the experience of the temporal state, the narrative of self-destruction — which has been the focus of concern, especially in the fifth book. The variations and certainties of life cycles as a central narrative principle are evident in Lydgate's texts, for he recognizes and engages context-dependent narratives of time: 'as in tyme, foorth euerythyng is brought, | so tyme ageynward bryngith euerything to nouht'.[65]

Everyman and Individual Life Cycles

A comparative close reading of how stages of life are strategically negotiated in a poem entitled *La Male Regle* by one of Lydgate's contemporaries, the privy seal clerk Thomas Hoccleve (*c.* 1367–1427), reveals the dynamic variations that similar charting of ages can have in a different context. *La Male Regle*, one of Hoccleve's earlier compositions, from between 1405 and 1406, is a testamentary poem (about a bachelor's lively expeditions in the taverns of Westminster), but it also belongs to the complaint and begging genres.[66] The narrator complains about his poverty and frailty and entreats the god of health and the current Treasurer for health and wealth. He attributes his decrepit state to his unruly misspent youth, and here we move from what appears to be a narrative about Everyman in old age being sage and recognizing the need to pay the price of excessive drinking, eating, and spending in youth, to what most believe are autobiographical details (or at

[63] Burrow, *The Ages of Man*, p. 189.

[64] Lydgate, *Troy Book*, ed. by Bergen, v, ll. 3565–70, p. 874.

[65] Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, i, ll. 1413–14, p. 39.

[66] For the kinds of reading strategies that this poem invites, see Perkins, 'Thomas Hoccleve, La Male Regle'.

least some details) of Hoccleve's individual journey in life.[67] There are certainly vivid and realistic descriptions of the delights of a bachelor's youth, details about the desire to settle down in middle age, marrying, and, somewhat prophetically, periods of sickness in later life that all correspond with the author's, as well as specificities concerning various taverns and locations in early fifteenth-century London, which all give credence to the argument that it is autobiographical.[68] Whether autobiographical or not, what Hoccleve displays is a keen consciousness of the temporal specificity of the individual's relationship to time. The focus is on one life cycle, rather than on the collective cycle of ages as studied in Lydgate's poems. Yet is it really all that different to Lydgate's imaginings? Is this poem prioritizing the urgency of immediate action in a specific individual's life cycle? Or does it also relate the individual to wider timescales?

The simple answer to both these questions is yes. This poem is as much about the macroscopic stages of Everyman's life as about the individual life cycle of the author, and Hoccleve's invocations of wider cycles have every bit as much detail, hybridism, and context dependency as Lydgate's. What, we shall see, Hoccleve's imaginings of Everyman's life cycle and Lydgate's imaginings of the life cycles of a nation, of the Wheel of Fortune, and of time itself share in common is how they all are inextricably bound with a quest for understanding individual specificities. These specificities are various; they may be of adolescence, the synchronic states of youth and age, or the relationship of one man's journey with that of Everyman. They all share the common narrative that 'self-knowledge [is] inextricably bound to the individual's relationship to time — past, present, future, and the hereafter'.[69]

In Hoccleve's short poem an opening address to the allegorical personification of Health raises consciousness of the temporality of this secular world and its 'worldly welthe'.[70] Yet in this testamentary poem that charts the various phases of life we do not begin at birth, or even infancy, but rather in old age reflecting back on life, not so much as a means to emphasize memory but as a way to accentuate temporality and change. We are instructed that health is 'abouen alle that in eerthe be'.[71] The temporal nature of this precious commodity is emphasized by the narrative of the former state of healthy youth changing to the current state of loss in old age:

[67] For a biography of Hoccleve, see Burrow, *Thomas Hoccleve*.

[68] For a discussion about the construction of the autobiographical voice, see Knapp, 'Bureaucratic Identity and the Construction of the Self'.

[69] Jaritz and Moreno-Riano, 'Time and Eternity', p. 5.

[70] Hoccleve, 'La Male Regle', ed. by Furnivall and Gollancz, III, l. 6, p. 25.

[71] Hoccleve, 'La Male Regle', ed. by Furnivall and Gollancz, III, l. 4, p. 25.

> than was I wel tho felte I no duresse
> tho farsid was I with hertes gladnesse;
> And now my body empty is, & bare
> Of ioie and ful of seekly heuynesse,
> Al poore of ese & ryche of euel force![72]

Reflection on the lesson learnt from such a change of fortune follows: 'now can I knowe feeste fro penaunce; | and whil I was with thee kowde I nat so'.[73] Consciousness of time duration then conveys the intensity of present strife: 'my grief and bisy smert cotidian | so me labouren & tormenten sore'.[74] The narrative of change is attributed as the cause for this torment: 'what thow art now weel remember I can'.[75] The past in the present — via memory — is how ageing is used in this poem as a means to draw attention to the present disadvantaged state of Hoccleve. The use of precisely quantified moments and durations and the act of reflection are the primary narrative time strategies that enable focus on his own specific misspent youth to become generalized about the state of youth in any time: 'of yowthe allas why wilt thow nat enclyne, | and vn-to reuled resoun bowe thee?'.[76] A. C. Spearing remarks that the technique of interchanging the focus between a specific time and a vague notion of time is a strategy common to other works of the period in England, when some writers can be seen to be 'struggling to find means of centering their works in their personal histories rather than in intellectual schemes'.[77]

After a lengthy digression on the enjoyable and flamboyant delights of a bachelor's youth, a return is made to the specific occasion of this narrative, as signalled by the use of a context-dependent referent, a quantified duration: 'and out of tyme nat two yeer or three, | but .xx.ti wyntir past continuelly'.[78] However, the contrasting times are no longer used as a causal means to convey the present as a sorry state in comparison to the past. Rather, the interlude of a discussion of the state of youth allows the narrative to change the focus on the contrast between

[72] Hoccleve, 'La Male Regle', ed. by Furnivall and Gollancz, III, ll. 12–16, p. 25.

[73] Hoccleve, 'La Male Regle', ed. by Furnivall and Gollancz, III, ll. 23–24, p. 26.

[74] Hoccleve, 'La Male Regle', ed. by Furnivall and Gollancz, III, ll. 25–26, p. 26.

[75] Hoccleve, 'La Male Regle', ed. by Furnivall and Gollancz, III, l. 27, p. 26.

[76] Hoccleve, 'La Male Regle', ed. by Furnivall and Gollancz, III, ll. 69–70, p. 27.

[77] Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry*, p. 113.

[78] Hoccleve, 'La Male Regle', ed. by Furnivall and Gollancz, III, ll. 110–11, p. 28. These flamboyant, even mischievous delights are reminiscent of those in Mary Dzon's essay on the rebellious youth.

these two times. Past youth is no longer a positive time of good health; conversely the abundance of the past is now a negative force in the poem. The wiles of youth are presented as the direct cause of his current sickness due to the follies in his mismanagement of both his time and his purse. The sense of duration is used to emphasize this mismanagement in the past: 'day by day' he haunted wine-houses, 'eerly or late' where he was to be found with the cooks.[79] He would play truant from his work after drinking 'on the someres day', and even in the winter he would repeatedly seek the attention of the flattering boatmen.[80] Precisely calculated moments of time (precise within the context of the narrative) contribute to a sense of the poem as a judgemental narrative on his past: there are specific moments that occur over time as well as specific causes that result in the current lamentation.

The authority of the distant past is used as a means to arbitrate specific misdemeanours in the recent past: the written word recorded in days gone by is used as a value system by which to judge his actions from his youth, as we are told that drinking, gambling, and over indulgence are condemned 'in bokkes as that I haue, or this, red'.[81] Next, a moralization about the social evils of flattery (a very topical and contemporary sin in the courtly world which Hoccleve-the-author inhabits[82]) brings these voices from the recorded past and the past life of Hoccleve-the-narrator into the present moment, the present moment of not only the narrator but also the medieval readers. The specifics of Hoccleve's own fragile socio-economic status become an Everyman's narrative, as they are linked with the verbal unreliability inherent in so many contemporary social relationships: 'feyned wordes of plesance | annoyen aftir thogh they plese a tyme'.[83] Hoccleve recognizes 'that the unfixed medium of language can be misused as a tool of self-interest' in relationships such as those between lords and servants, kings and counselors, and money-seeking boatmen and those aspiring to be a 'maister'.[84] The specific example of succumbing to flattery in the past prompts a discussion of the sin in universal terms, but resonances of temporality remain. The feigned

[79] Hoccleve, 'La Male Regle', ed. by Furnivall and Gollancz, III, l. 122, p. 29; III, l. 180, p. 31.

[80] Hoccleve, 'La Male Regle', ed. by Furnivall and Gollancz, III, l. 185, p. 31.

[81] Hoccleve, 'La Male Regle', ed. by Furnivall and Gollancz, III, l. 226, p. 32. The importance attached to the written record in the Middle Ages is addressed by Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*.

[82] Walling, 'Vicious Praise'.

[83] Hoccleve, 'La Male Regle', ed. by Furnivall and Gollancz, III, ll. 241–22, p. 32.

[84] Meyer-Lee, 'Hoccleve and the Apprehension of Money', p. 192.

words last for 'a tyme'; the duration is not specified but is clearly transitory. As David Mills observes:

> the words which signify so much to the narrator — *courtesie*, *gentil*, *maister* — have, on the lips of the street traders, been drained of their overtones of moral worth and social dignity. As [Hoccleve] realizes, they do not have the inherent value that he assigned to them.[85]

Flattery, like verbal referents, is temporal and has no stability, raising consciousness of the widespread cultural unease about the status of the English vernacular, about the role of permanent and temporary records, and about the diversity of representations within time.

The use of a subjective referent moves us from this current topical debate and returns the narrative focus to the time of Hoccleve's youth, when 'by nightirtale out of al mesure' he surpassed everyone in the privy-seal office with his all-night drinking binges.[86] The use of night-time draws attention to his excess, by using the period of dormancy to continue with his actions, and attention to his lack of control can be drawn. The contrast of how Hoccleve spent his time in comparison to his fellow clerks in his youthful days acts as the causal explanation of how they differ in the present, for it is he who has altered and in older age is now sage, creating an impending urgency of his need to change immediately: 'be waar, Hoccleue I rede thee therfore, | and to a mene reule thow thee dresse!'[87]

This sense of a need for urgent action in the present after contemplating one's journey through the ages of life is a common Everyman narrative in the period. If we read Hoccleve's poem in the context of this Everyman narrative, suddenly it is no longer charting the life cycle of just the author and Everyman, but also of the Christian cycle of salvational history that places us in the sixth age of the world.[88] One only has to turn to the contemporary morality play entitled *Everyman* to understand how medieval readers would have identified Saint Augustine's seven ages of time operating within Hoccleve's *La Male Regle*. In the morality play of nine hundred lines composed near the end of the fifteenth century, dramatic ten-

[85] Mills, 'The Voices of Thomas Hoccleve', p. 91.

[86] Hoccleve, 'La Male Regle', ed. by Furnivall and Gollancz, IV, l. 306, p. 34.

[87] Hoccleve, 'La Male Regle', ed. by Furnivall and Gollancz, III, ll. 241–42, p. 36.

[88] Saint Augustine (*c.* 400 AD) defined the six ages of the world (each age lasting about a thousand years) according to Christian historical periodization, from the birth of Adam to the apocalypse of Revelations. In this scheme there is a seventh age that signifies not world history but eternal life.

sions are created through the simultaneous conception of dramatic time as focusing on the split second before death and the protagonist's charting of the ages of his life. As he charts these ages, a metaphorical stripping of Everyman occurs through the abandonment by Beauty, then Strength, then Discretion, then the Five Wits, revealing 'the pattern of his life, arranged in terms of the attributes associated in turn with Youth, Manhood, Middle Age and Old Age'.[89] Death, the last stage of life, is alarmingly encountered by the protagonist as he protests that it gave him no warning and intensifies his search for spiritual satisfaction in life before the end encroaches. What is crucial for us in the context of Hoccleve's poem is that, just in time, Everyman recognizes death as part of the life cycle and that only eternity survives. He recognizes the liminal moment that everyone is caught in is the temporal sixth age of Christ awaiting the seventh age of the Last Judgement that will mark the eternal Sabbath.

This is the liminal moment that Hoccleve's poem also engages with. The Hoccleve-narrator gains the same kind of self awareness that Oedipus did in Lydgate's text: both recognize the destructive linearity within which they are trapped and the simultaneous cyclicality of the moment in its causal relationship with the past. The only option within this entrapment is to decline or rise, suffer or ask for forgiveness. However, just as with Oedipus and the riddle, in Hoccleve's poem the moral lesson of Everyman's journey in life is not the only cycle of time invoked. As the poem closes, Hoccleve does not request forgiveness; rather he requests payment of his clerical services in a specific period: 'for Michel terme that was last'.[90] He desires the immediate payment of ten pounds for services rendered specifically in the recent past: 'to paie me that due is for this yeer'.[91] Such an employment of precise temporal markers superbly illustrates Hoccleve's petitionary use of causal connections as a means to focus on the present specific need for payment. Thus, interconnections between the past and future in the present are used to locate the present for Everyman in the continuity of the sixth age of time. Paradoxically such interconnections also draw our attention to the temporal specificities of the moment for the individual, for Hoccleve himself when he addresses the Treasurer, returning us to our autobiographical reading of this poem about Everyman's journey.

[89] King, 'Morality Plays', p. 258.

[90] Hoccleve, 'La Male Regle', ed. by Furnivall and Gollancz, III, l. 422, p. 38.

[91] Hoccleve, 'La Male Regle', ed. by Furnivall and Gollancz, III, l. 421, p. 38.

The Temporality of the Life Cycle

What this technique also highlights is the fact that Hoccleve is concerned with temporality and change as it occurs between different phases of the life cycle and within the present moment, rather than the more traditional 'medieval' narrative that raises consciousness of the temporality of the sixth age as a preparation for the end stage of the life cycle: death as the entry into eternity. While death is the antithesis of life, it is invariably an integral part of the life cycle in being the end product. With this in mind, there is one final reading strategy that we can employ in relation to Hoccleve's testamentary poem and that is in reading how anxieties about the temporality of life are negotiated in comparison to a different Everyman's narrative, Lydgate's *Dance of Death*, an allegory on the fragility of life and universality of death, or a 'traditional' medieval narrative. The Dance of Death is a genre akin to the English morality plays and was a European phenomenon particularly in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[92] Lydgate translated his text from a French original, *Danse Macabre in Cimetière des Innocents*, which he saw in Paris in 1426.[93] Lydgate's text, along with images, was painted on the walls of the cloister at St Paul's Cathedral in London around 1430 (but was later destroyed in the Reformation in 1549). The text, however, remains extant in twelve manuscripts. In the piece there is a constant interplay between the figure of death and every order of social standing — religious and social positions alternating — which educates us, as well as taunts us, that all are equal in the face of death and all must prepare to meet their maker.[94] While the sins are characteristic Everyman sins for each of the thirty-six figures, there are enough hints of topical specificities concerning the nature of the sins and anxieties of the figures to suggest allusions to Henry V and the contemporary concerns of civic representatives. What is of most interest to us, however, is how anxieties about the nature of the transience of life are displayed. For instance, in the dance with the physician, death affirms:

[92] For a survey of this genre and theories on its origins, see Clark, *The Dance of Death*.

[93] At the cemetery of the Holy Innocents in Paris. This is the earliest recorded visual example. See Oosterwijk, 'Death, Memory and Commemoration'.

[94] The figures are as follows: a pope, emperor, cardinal, king, patriarch, constable, archbishop, baron, princess, bishop, squire, abbott, abbess, bailiff, astronomer, burgess, canon secular, merchant, carthusian, sergeant, monk, usurer, poor man, physician, squire, gentlewoman, man of law, Mr John Rykill, fool, parson, juror, minstrel, labourer, friar minor, child, young clerk, and a hermit. Lydgate makes six additions to his French source: the four women, juror, and conjuror.

Mans lyfe is nought els, platly for to thinke,
But as a winde which is transitory,
Passing ay forth, whether he wake or winke,
Toward this daunce, habeth this in memorye,
Remembryng aye there is no better victory
In this life here than fle syn at the least;
Than shal ye reygne in paradise with glorye.
Happy is he that maketh in heaven this feast![95]

[It is plain that Man is nothing
But a wind that is transitory,
Passing through whether he be awake or asleep
Towards this dance, keep this in your memory,
Remember also there is no better victory
In this present life than fleeing sin,
Then you shall reign in Paradise with glory.]

While the instability and temporality of life is invoked here, this transience is ever-present in the memory: the dance remains steadfast and continual in every waking and sleeping moment, requiring constant preparation for the eternal life. This sentiment is echoed time and time again through this dance, whether we encounter high or low estate, rich or poor, man or woman, old or young.[96] What we can conclude in reading Hoccleve's poem alongside Lydgate's insistent narrative about the temporality of life is that when death is the end causal product (as in Hoccleve's poem) rather than the subject (as in Lydgate's work), then very different perspectives of this stage are displayed. When death is part of Hoccleve's narrative of all stages of the life cycle, then ideas of change and urgency predominate in comparison to when death is Lydgate's focus, where ideas of stasis and permanence prevail.

Thus it is tempting, at first glance, to summarize Hoccleve's *La Male Regle* as being about the need to repent one's youthful misbehaviour in old age in preparation for death. However, as the study above displays, closer attention reveals the pluralities of perspective regarding both youth and old age, and the variety of ways in which they interrelate, resulting in a more informed description of this poem. Hoccleve's *La Male Regle* is about stereotypical behavioural features of unruly youth in comparison to the wisdom and Boethian perspectives that old

[95] Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. by Bergen, III, ll. 641– 48, p. 1043.

[96] See, for instance, Sally Crawford's discussions of the relationships between birth, adulthood, and death in her essay in this volume.

age offers. It is also about the woe and regret in old age that cause unruly anxiety and concern in comparison to exuberance and fun that one experiences in youth. In short, the poem is about how perceptions of the stages of life change: it is about reconstructive memory processes of youthful days and about anticipations of the present, that is, anticipations of how declining old age is in constant flux and change depending upon the context of perspective.

It is not just in the parallelling of different authors, or parallelling of different texts, but even in the parallelling of different perspectives within the one text where we can see in the fifteenth century that the cycle of life is imagined as a conceptual formula, but not as a predictable or static formula. What this study reveals is that the formulas are not so straightforward to read. There is evidence of each age state being perceived as distinct and as wholly interdependent; young adulthood and old age are variously, depending upon context, affirmative and negative; life can be seen to constitute just a couple or numerous stages of a cycle; life is understood as both linear and cyclical; formulaic descriptions for age states are clearly useful and at other times are too opaque; and our modern sensibilities can inform, and be informed by, the medieval manifestations. It is in the emphasis on transitions from one stage to the next and on the coexistence of plural perspectives where the continuities and change of ageing can truly be understood in these fifteenth-century texts.

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